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FATHERS AND SONS.

CHAPTER XVI.

It is impossible to doubt the difficulty, to say nothing of the delicacy of poor Jane's position: indeed it would be superfluous to call the reader's attention to what may really be called the perils to which she is exposed, knowing so much as by this time he does. Not a word could pass her lips—not a look, not a sigh, could escape her, without being noted down by Miss Harris. The audible scratching of the pen of the recording inquisitor behind the curtain, does give something like warning to the self-criminating victim, and may sometimes serve to check his communicativeness; but with Jane—no—her fate, her fortunes,

and her happiness seemed to be at the mercy of persons, who ought, upon every principle of honesty and rectitude, to have upheld *her* cause "against a world in arms."

But now, as to Miss Harris's letter to the besmeared Smylar. When she got it, she read it through twice before she even laid it down. It sometimes happens that plain common sense beats *finesse* hollow. Smylar had laid her plans skilfully enough to answer her great purpose; but Smylar had not, in grasping the subject at large, prepared herself for certain little incidental events. She knew, to be sure, the purity and honesty of Jane's mind; but, judging from her own feelings, and regulating her conduct towards her young mistress by the scale of her own passions, she thought there could be no doubt whatever of the young lady's acceding to any arrangements which would bring her and the man whom she liked under the same roof; more especially after she had, as she thought effectually, succeeded in undermining—to a certain extent—the high principle by which she had, up to the present stage of her life, been actuated.

Mrs. Smylar just at this period was on the edge of a precipice, or, one might more appositely say, performing her evolutions (as probably she had frequently done in early life) on the tight-rope, from which the most trifling false step would bring her to the ground. To be sure, Miss Harris generously acted clown for her, and chalked her shoes to add to her security, with all the winning grace of hollow friendship. When she got that young person's letter, which at once showed her how much was to be feared from the timidity or sensibility of sweet Jenny Bruff, the difficulty and delicacy of her own position were made evident to her. Then came the question—What was next to be done? Having acted as she had, and having concerted the scheme for bringing together those whom she wished to love each other—if they did not love each other already—how was she to proceed under the belief of a break-down in the resolution of her doomed victim?—for so she considered Jane, and victim she meant her to be.

Several questions were now to be mooted by the heroine of Bullock's-smithy, and one

—a very important one—was, touching the capacity of Miss Harris for judging the probability of effects from apparent causes; and whether she had—looking to her qualifications—formed a just estimate of Jane's feelings and apprehensions.

The next question was, whether, since pens and ink have been sent upon earth for the purpose of man's and woman's destruction, Jane, if she *did* break down, and write to her father, would or would not, in the excitement of the moment, the plenitude of her repentance, and the anxiety for reconciliation with her parent, inform the colonel that the scheme of bringing her and Frank Grindle together, originated entirely with his confidential adviser.

Then came a third question; whether, in order to prevent such an explosion, she should venture upon the yet untried experiment of herself writing to Jane. The debate upon this, however, lasted but a few moments. She felt that she could not check the impulse of the daughter without inculpating herself with the father. What then *was* to be done? Writing to Harris for fur-

ther particulars might equally commit her; and Harris, according to her notions, was not sufficiently acute to comprehend any thing put hypothetically, or without a plain statement of facts and names; and so the mill-work of Mrs. Smylär's brain went on and on, and round and round, until at last—by no means an uncommon case—she resolved to let matters take their own course, always qualifying this resolution by the reflection, that, by the family arrangement of submitting all the letters which arrived per post to her *surveillance* in the first instance, she might with her theatrical activity withhold any one which came to hand addressed to the colonel from Jane, leaving it to some further stretch of ingenuity to give such cogent reasons to the poor girl for what she had done, as might convince her that her interposition was based on the best motives, and no doubt would eventually produce the most favourable results.

Still it was not impossible, nor even improbable, that Jane might direct her letter to the colonel at the Doldrum—knowing as she did how much of his time he passed at that

club. If once the implicit confidence which he had so long reposed in Smylar was shaken — no matter however little — the violence and abruptness of his temper and character would have burst forth, and she would have been sent off at a moment's notice; all her hopes frustrated, all her expectations wrecked. And so we may at least indulge in the belief that the fiend in human shape—or rather in the shape in which her mantua-maker chose her to appear—must have passed a sleepless, miserable night; her uneasiness upon the main point of her career being by no means mitigated in consequence of the evident addiction of Bruff to the society and *cercle* of Lady Gramm.

At Amersham's the complexity of feelings was scarcely less embarrassing. Jane, as we have seen, was too acute not to perceive the anxiety of Emma for Frank's arrival, nor could Emma blind herself to the longing, dreading, lingering, hoping, fearing feelings of Jane; and as the hours wore on, poor Jane gradually became more tremblingly alive to the delicacy of her position in consenting to become the companion in a coun-

try-house of a most agreeable and accomplished man, so very peculiarly placed in regard to her as was this amiable brother-in-law elect; but still she could not summon courage enough to speak to Mrs. Amersham on the point, for fear of incurring an imputation of vanity.

"And why," said she to herself, "may not this Mr. Grindle come here as well as any other friend of the Amershams? It is true that he is destined to be a near connexion of mine—a strong reason why he *should* be here. If I remonstrate upon this point, I show either that I fancy myself charming enough to drive him into a dishonourable rivalry with his brother-in-law, or that I have not sufficient firmness of principle, or dignity of character, to withstand his fascinations, which are to lead *me* to a violation of a contract, which in the other case I am to be sufficiently vain to imagine him anxious to invalidate." And so Jane said to herself further, "Let him come—I know my heart—I know my duty—he shall be my friend, my brother-in-law—but my father's will must be obeyed; and if it be, Francis Grindle and I shall naturally see

much of each other. Why have I even for a moment alarmed myself at his visit upon this occasion?"

Now all this, which is perfectly reasonable, perfectly philosophical, and perfectly just, Jane, as we have just observed, "said to herself," but she said it to nobody else; and when Harris, who was watching every turn of her countenance, and catching every syllable that fell from her lips, for the purpose of reporting to "head-quarters," saw the struggles which were passing in her mind, she felt more convinced than ever that Mrs. Smylar's scheme was a failure; and actuated by that apprehension, coupled with a prospective certainty of being herself turned off by the colonel in case her secret correspondence with Smylar should be discovered, she in her turn began to calculate whether, if Smylar adopted a bolder line of conduct, she herself should not write to the colonel to tell him what was going on.

This "wheel within wheel" system, certainly looks threatening to some of the plotters; nor was Miss Harris's slight attachment to Mr. Rumfit, the colonel's own man and

butler, the former—and perhaps even actual —aspirant to Mrs. Smylar's hand, likely to check her exertions in the way of self-preservation in the establishment, even at the risk of jeopardizing the "great lady in the little parlour;" and as her fears increased, so proportionably increased her restlessness as to longer keeping the secret of Mr. Frank's visit; whereupon she determined, if she did not hear from Mrs. Smylar in the morning, to take upon herself the task of enlightening the colonel upon that most interesting subject.

She did *not* hear from Mrs. Smylar, nor was she likely ever to hear from her upon any matter which she considered important, inasmuch as upon Mrs. Smylar's established principle she never could be brought to commit herself in writing. She would have liked a dialogue with Miss Harris extremely well; in the course of which she might have extracted from her the circumstances on which her apprehensions were grounded; but suspecting as she did that Miss Harris was not entirely indifferent to Mr. Rumfit, whose presumptuous advances she (Smylar) had considered it due

to her station to check and discourage; and, moreover, thinking it not quite impossible that a correspondence might be going on between them, inasmuch as Rumfft by his activity and assiduity might get possession of the letters even before *her*, or might have his own particular despatches thrown down what the kitchen-maid called the "hairy," or directed to him at the Butlers' Club (of which he was a distinguished member), she determined entirely to keep aloof, and hover like a hawk over her prey till pouncing-time came.

One hears a vast deal of the "republic" of letters, and of the "equality" of human beings, and the universality of the rights and privileges of mankind; but high-sounding as all these very cheering, consolatory, and encouraging preachments and speechifications may be, in point of fact when tested by practice they are so much nonsense; because, although men and women may be universally constructed alike (each in their kind), the disparity of their qualities and qualifications is too evident to require a moment's consideration. We might seem to speak invidiously, if we instituted any comparison here between

living people; and therefore we abstain. But take the whole course of natural history—is there anything like a republicanism in the construction of animals, touching their uses, their sagacity, their figures, their instinct? Is a toad the equal of a race-horse? Is a duck the peer of a lion? Is a worm the fellow of a grey-hound? Wonderful as may be the formation of all these, or fifty other creatures, as applicable to the several purposes for the fulfilment of which they have been created, nobody can be found to deny the gradations of intellect (if intellect instinct may be called) by which different animals of different genera and species are distinguished.

Now of the same genus were Mrs. Smylar and Miss Harris; but as to species, Mrs. Smylar was as the race-horse to the toad (had *they* been of the same genus); and while Miss Bruff's maid fancied that she saw through the designs of Mrs. Smylar, and felt assured that by taking the step upon which she had determined she could not only carry her point by damaging *her* with the colonel, but eventually secure an alliance with Mr. Rumfit, and necessarily attain a consequent establish-

ment in the colonel's house, she was playing *Toady* at a wonderful disadvantage. Poor Miss Harris! little did *she* know the sort of person with whom she had to deal—little did she anticipate the results of her great political experiment.

Acting however upon the impulse—not of the moment merely—but upon the impulse given to her mind and feelings, after some consideration, and after her disappointment at not receiving an encouraging answer, or indeed any answer at all, from Mrs. Smylar (whether she had got any letter from Mr. Rumfit, history tells us not), she sat down when her young lady was gone to dinner, and wrote to her master that which follows:

"Tuesday.

"Sir,

"I am sure you will forgive the very great liberty I take in venturing to write these few lines to you, which is a liberty nothing could induce me to take, but that I think it right you should know of some circumstances which you are not apprised of at present.

"Nobody upon earth can be more attached to a mistress than I am to Miss Jane; I hope I have always shown it in all I have ever said or done, since I have lived with her; and there is not a sweeter-tempered, kinder-hearted young lady in the world, and I would die to serve her, which is the real cause of this letter.

"I think it my duty, sir, to tell you, that Mr. Francis Grindle is expected here this evening; he was to have come yesterday; and I am sure my young lady is in a state of great agitation about it, for, as it seems to me, Mr. and Mrs. Amersham are most anxious for him to be here while Miss Jane is here, and she is, therefore, the more worried on that account.

"Now, sir, although I would not for the world mean to say—and I am sure, sir, you will believe me—that Mr. and Mrs. Amersham wish to do any thing to disparage Miss Jane's intended husband in her eyes, by bringing Mr. Francis Grindle here, still having lived with her now for several years, I know enough of her to know that this meeting and their staying in the same house toge-

ther, will be a great trial to her, and so I thought it my duty—and I hope to be forgiven for what I have done—to write and tell you the truth.

"I have no motive, sir, and can have none, but acting for the best. I know that Miss Jane is good and excellent in every way, but from what she has said to me I humbly think she ought not to be placed in the situation in which she is, considering that it seems as if Mr. and Mrs. Amersham wished to set up Mr. Francis Grindle against his half-brother, and this seems to flurry my young lady; and therefore I have told you the truth, and beg and pray of you, sir, not to say one word about this letter, not to my young lady, *nor anybody else in the house*" (underscored) "for it would cause me great trouble if you did, and, as I have said before, I have no object but doing good, as a dutiful servant should do.

"I am, sir,
"Your's most obediently,
"EMILY HARRIS."

This letter, carefully written, cautiously

spelt, and clearly directed to the gallant colonel, in due course by that night's post reached Harley-street, and in less than ten minutes after its arrival was opened and read by Mrs. Smylar, who, taking into her kind consideration the advancing age and increasing infirmities of her respected and reputable master, felt it part of her duty to relieve him as much as possible from the trouble of poring over correspondence which she did not consider it necessary for him, at his time of life, to worry himself about.

What Mrs. Smylar's feelings towards her dear friend Miss Harris were, or what her resolutions as to her eventual destiny might be when she had read this "treacherous scrawl," it is quite impossible for us to say; but its contents decided her as to the course she was on the instant to pursue. That question was settled. The moment she saw the colonel she would open his eyes to what she thought the schemes of the Amershams. For although it was the scheme of all others which she wished to succeed, still if the colonel *was* to be made aware of it, she, and

she only, was the person to warn him. And so, as it seems, the plot thickened.

Amongst the letters which arrived for Colonel Bruff, was one from Jane herself. That, however, the sacrilegious hands of Smylar dared not to touch. There *are* limits not to be passed, lines not to be transgressed. She certainly screwed it, and twisted it, and peeped into it, in hopes of getting something out of it, but in vain: and so it reached its destination.

Whether Miss Harris had also written to Rumfit, either through his club, or down the "hairy," we are unable to say, but there can be no doubt that he appeared exceedingly fidgetty and nervous during the morning. Smylar was agitated. The least additional touch of rouge was considered necessary to enable her to meet the gaze of the colonel, and an extra bite of the lips to give them the ruddiness which the gallant and disagreeable Behemoth was so frequently inclined to mar.

Smylar had unquestionably taken a deciding step in opening Miss Harris's letter,

which it is quite needless to observe she meant to answer by return of post; but the restless manner of Mr. Rumfit, a sort of twiddle-finger kind of nervousness, somewhat worried her, as conveying to her mind the suggestion that Miss Harris had communicated to *him* her intention of addressing the colonel. Whereupon she (Smylar) was particularly desirous of opening her heart to her dear master, so that she might have ample time to reply—of course in *his* name—to the warning given by that prudential young person.

"Well, sir," said Smylar when she first saw the gallant animal, "have you heard from Miss Jane to-day?"

"Yes," said the colonel, "there's a letter from her. Haven't opened it. Conclude she's well, else she couldn't write."

"No, that's true," said Smylar, "but there may be news from Mrs. Amersham's which you ought to know; nay, colonel, there *is* news which you ought to know."

And here let us remark on the singularity of Mrs. Smylar's position at the moment our history has now reached. Driven to expose,

for the sake of priority, a plan of Mrs. Amersham's, the entire success of which would have given her the greatest pleasure; which she herself had been working, and which would, more than any thing else in the world, tend to the accomplishment of the object she had in view. Such is the force of circumstances.

"What news?" said Bruff. "News from Jane, eh?"

"Yes," said Smylar; "there may be visitors there, whose presence is not desirable."

"Can't see who—what?" said the colonel.

"Why suppose," said Smylar, "Mr. Francis Grindle should be on a visit there—what then?"

"Eh?" exclaimed the colonel; "what the canter, the saint, the butterfly-hunter, the frog-catcher?"

"Why," said the lady, biting her lips to give them a tint, "it *may* be so; and it may be that your friends the Amershams think *that* the better match of the two."

"That'll do," said the colonel. "Can't make you out. One day the Amershams are all for one match, another day for another

match, as you say. What can they care about it, eh? Why should they worry themselves to shuffle about and whiffle like weathercocks?"

"Oh," said Smylar, "if you are unreasonable enough to expect people to give *you* reasons for their conduct, I really can't help you. All I know is—and I feel it my duty to tell you, for nobody else will—that this fascinating Mr. Frank Grindle is domesticated with your daughter, while she is under an engagement to be married to his half-brother, who is not admitted into her society. Now," added she emphatically and theatrically, "that's the fact, and what do you think of it?"

"Think!" said Bruff, looking as if he really were capable of thinking; "why upon my life I don't know. Jane told me two or three days ago, that the Amershams had got acquainted with this spider-hunter at Broadstairs, but I never troubled my head about that. As I said to Lady Gramm, Jane is to be married this day three weeks—what else does it matter?"

"Oh," said Smylar, contracting her well-corked eyebrows, "you make Lady Gramm a *confidante* in your family matters. Is that

prudent, colonel, recollecting all that has been said of her early life?"

This Mrs. Smylar, who knew nothing whatever of Lady Gramm, except perhaps through some lying, libellous publication, thought was a hard hit, which might be useful in the prosecution of her own project.

"I don't know what you mean by *confidante*," said Bruff, "because I don't know the language; but she takes an interest in my affairs."

"Yes," interrupted Smylar, who could not get rid of her habit of mingling jest with her satire; the true honey and gall of the provincial *coulisse*, "and would take the principal too if she could. I speak as I feel. Lady Gramm probably has objects in anticipation which of course I have not. *My* views are genuine and straight-forward, and what *I* say I say with no feeling but for *your* good, and that of your dear child."

"That'll do," said Bruff, "that'll do. I am satisfied of that. Eh, what, Smylar—crying? Come, come, that's nonsense, crying will spoil your complexion."

Many true words are spoken in jest, and

most assuredly Smylar's tears would have done serious damage to the beautiful glow on her countenance—the roses on her cheeks were not likely to flourish by watering. However, she was quite mistress of her art, and the two little pin's-heads which she crocodiled out, rested upon the lower lashes of her eyes, and there maintained their station, aided by the *crêmes* and *pomades* which are so earnestly recommended to ladies *en décadence.*

"I say, colonel," emphatically proceeded Mrs. Smylar, wiping away the drops, "that I feel it my duty to tell you what is going on. If I have behaved wrongly—if I have outstepped that duty—send me away. Heaven knows," and then came a throw up of the orbs, "what my intentions are, and—"

"There, there," said the colonel, "that'll do. Now then, sit down—don't flurry yourself. What d'ye mean?—explain. Is this Frank brought down there to supplant George, and these people privy to it?—is that what you mean?"

"That is it," said Smylar, "and the instant it came to my knowledge I resolved that you should hear of it."

"That'll do," said the colonel, "what's best to be done? I won't stand this. You have puzzled me about these Amershams, I tell you; but what do you know? that's the point. I don't ask *how* you know it, but *what* do you know?

"Why," said Smylar, with one of her best low comedy *soubrette* leers, "I *do* know, and I made it a point to know, because I knew more before; in fact, colonel, it is a plan; how managed I don't pretend to guess, but so it is; and what the *dénouement*, as we used to say at Bullock's-smithy, may be, I of course, not being behind the scenes, cannot pretend to guess. Still that is my view of the plot; and if I have done wrong in telling you, as I said before, treat me as I deserve."

"But," said the colonel, "let's see what Jane herself says; for, as I told you, I have not opened her letter."

"That," said Smylar, "will settle the affair."

"Here," said the colonel, "read it to me. It will save my eyes, or rather my glasses. As Lady Gramm says, I have over-worked my sight."

Smylar proceeded to open the letter from Jane, and read thus:

"Tuesday.

"My dearest Father,

"The kindness of our dear friends the Amershams has, as usual, been unmitigated —their hospitality and friendship are unbounded, and in my present peculiar position nothing can exceed Emma's tenderness towards me, or her good-hearted husband's anxiety to render me perfectly comfortable.

"There is nobody staying here but Lady Cramly and her daughter—a remarkably nice, quiet, yet highly accomplished girl. Her mother has travelled a great deal, and like great travellers, I believe, has seen a great deal—she is, however, exceedingly clever, and wonderfully amusing to a quiet body like me.

"I have heard from both Sir George Grindle and his son, who seem to threaten a visit here. I have no doubt the Amershams would give them a kind reception; and what renders the coincidence curious, they have invited Mr. Francis Grindle here, with whom, as I

told you, they became acquainted during his uncle's illness at Broadstairs.

"I shall be very glad to improve my acquaintance with him who is destined so soon to become a near connexion of ours; but it is odd enough that the Amershams should have made a friendship with him without even knowing, or at least thinking at the time they were first introduced, that he was destined to be my brother-in-law.

"I have told you that I have heard from George Grindle; I have not answered his letter, for it leaves me in doubt whether he and his father will remain at Brighton long enough to receive it. Lady Gramm has written to me very kindly, and tells me that you seem to enjoy her little quiet *réunions*. I have heard her say that London, in what they call the dull season of the year, is to *her* most agreeable.

"Our weather here is charming; but of course my mind is not quite at ease, although dear Emma is a great comfort to me, for I almost feel—not that I am very superstitious—that the death of Mr. Leeson has

somehow sadly altered the previously settled arrangements.

"Believe me, dearest father,

"Yours affectionately,

"JANE BRUFF."

Now, with the exception of the last two lines of this letter, there was not one syllable calculated to serve the purposes of either Smylar or Harris. Jane's openness of heart, and sincerity of character, told her father as mere matter of fact, that which these two plotters and counterplotters were hatching as something of the most vital importance.

Smylar was dead-beaten by the straightforwardness of the letter. All the credit she had taken to herself for finding out the juxtaposition of Jane and Francis was gone at a blow; and her exploit of opening Harris's exceedingly cunning epistle, recoiled most bitterly upon herself; for as it is evident, had she done no such thing, but permitted that letter to reach the colonel's hand, the candid and undisguised statement of his daughter would have entirely demolished the fruits of Harris's vigilance and activity: whereas now,

she had to fight the battle with Harris, and bear the blame herself. Therefore was it necessary for her—if she could manage it—to do something else, which, simply arising out of the actual state of affairs, might, if possible, attract or drive the colonel away from the parties at my Lady Gramm's—his admiration of which was her horror; for besides diverting him from her society, they kept him so exceedingly sober, that when he *did* come home, the warmth of his friendship and the ardour of his esteem did by no means resemble that which they had been before he had addicted himself to her *soirées*.

"Well, colonel," said she, after he had read the letter, "I confess I do not see why Mr. Francis Grindle, who is more nearly connected with Mr. Leeson than either his father or his half brother, is to be permitted to go about and visit—and especially visit Miss Jane—while Sir George and her intended husband are shut up moping and mumping. If I were you, I would go down to the Amershams' myself—why should you not?—they are old friends, connexions—*I* would;

and as you say I give you one account of them at one time, and another account at another, go—see—and judge for yourself: that's my advice."

"Is it?" said the colonel; and he began to look as people who have intellects look, when they begin to consider—"there's reason in that, there is; but you see the girl writes the truth."

"It isn't the girl," said Smylar, "as you call her—there's no fear of *her;* but mind the people with whom she is living. Now, what do you think of doing this, colonel?—what do you think of writing to Sir George? What I want, as you must know, is that every thing should turn out well. Suppose you go this afternoon to the Amershams', and see yourself what is going on."

"I haven't been there for I don't know how long," said the colonel.

"The happier they will be to see you," said Smylar.

"But I promised Lady Gramm," said the colonel, "to go this evening to see a man eat fireworks or something, and I can't—"

"Yes, colonel, you can," said Smylar, look-

ing at him in a way for which no half-price is admitted; "consider your daughter's happiness—your own peace of mind—never mind the fireworks—I know enough of those sort of things."

"That'll do," said the colonel. "I'll go—by Jove you are a treasure to me; to think now how you found this out—before Jenny wrote to—"

"That's it," said Smylar; "and now, colonel—all I depend upon is, that you will ask no questions at the Amershams' of any body, nor suffer any body to speak to you on the subject. There you will go—there you will catch this designing Mr. Francis, with all his mock grief, insinuating himself into Miss Jane's good graces, and then you will appreciate the friendship of the Amershams, and the little service I may have done to you."

"But I'll shoot Amersham," said Bruff, "if I find he is in the conspiracy; what, d'ye think that he—"

"I think nothing," said Smylar; "go, my dear colonel—keep your own counsel, and speak to nobody on *the* subject; you are

come down to see your daughter, and there's an end;—only mark, let the affair turn out as it will, my anxiety is that your views and wishes should not be frustrated."

Knowing the influence which Mrs. Smylar really did possess over the gallant jolter-head, there can be little doubt of her success in persuading him to follow her advice; which advice had, as is obvious, the double object of exciting, as she hoped, a quarrel with his daughter (an almost natural result of their meeting), and of withdrawing him from the fascinations of Lady Gramm's strong coffee and dimly lighted boudoir. He decided upon going: and now came another difficulty. In the ordinary course of things, he would have taken Mr. Rumfit as his servant; but Smylar could not permit of any interview between that person and Miss Harris under the circumstances. She therefore reminded the full-sized dolt that he could go by the railroad, as the station was not more than eight miles, or some such thing, from Amersham's house (which was about half the distance it was from London), and that the groom could take his portmanteau, dressing-case, and bag: and that

Simmons *was* there, and could dress him, and that Rumfit was a safeguard to the house;—all of which she urged with so much energy and anxiety, that any body who did not know the passionless coldness of her heart, and the grovelling calculativeness of her mind, would have fancied she had some very strong reason for wishing Mr. Rumfit to stay where he was. Not a bit of it: to prevent his *going* was the object, and having achieved that, she cared for nothing else; and she consummated her performance of the day by writing the following note to her dear friend Miss Harris:—

"The colonel begs you will take no notice to *him*, nor any body else, of what you wrote to him. He will be down before this post comes in. He thanks you."

This written in a disguised hand, was sealed and despatched. The colonel himself, locked up in an iron hearse on the railroad, was destined to hit his mark, as far as he was concerned, by eight or nine miles. Mrs. Smylar suggested to Mr. Rumfit the agreeableness of having some cake and wine in

her room, previously to a little bit of supper which she ordered to be ready at ten o'clock, during and after which she rallied him agreeably upon his affection for Emily Harris, who to *her* thinking "was one of the nicest girls she had ever seen."

At Amersham's matters were going on rather differently. There, in the usual routine of things, the trap in which Colonel Bruff by his forced march was to catch his daughter and Francis was all ready for his closing; and certainly his arrival, in a rickety sort of unglazed omnibus, drawn by one wretched pony — the omnibus, odd enough to say, being scarcely large enough to hold the colonel only, and being, moreover, called the Apollo, and which had, by dint of the last energies of the wretched animal that dragged it from the railway station, brought him to Amersham's in little less than two hours more than would have been expended if he had put himself behind a pair of Newman's posters in one of his currant-coloured chaises —startled Mrs. Amersham, Jane, and my Lady Cramly, and her daughter. The two last knew nothing of the colonel, except that

when he was announced by the same name as Jane, they concluded he was her father. Jane had not, of course, the remotest notion of seeing him there, and Mrs. Amersham, to whom he had never paid the civility of even a morning visit for years, felt almost frightened at his approach.

"My dear father!" said Jane, running to meet him as he entered the room, "what has happened?"

"Nothing," said the colonel, "nothing has happened; only as I was making a little excursion, I resolved, as my course of travelling would bring me within a mile or two of you, just to look in upon you; eh? that's all, dear."

Now Jane knew enough of her father to know that so far from *that* being all, it had nothing whatever to do with the matter; and Mrs. Amersham having exchanged looks with her astonished friend, they tacitly agreed that, to use a colloquial phrase, and one which perhaps they would not have used, there was "something in the wind."

"How's Amersham?" said the colonel, his eye wandering about in search of his host.

"He is not at home," answered Mrs. Amersham, "but he will be here shortly. Do you know Lady Cramly and Miss Cramly?" added the graceful mistress of the house.

The colonel telegraphed the "negative," and was forthwith presented in due form. Lady Cramly was particularly amiable in *her* way, and poor Seraphine was really so; but still Bruff felt rather uneasy at finding neither Amersham nor Frank of the party, and still more uneasy because he did not exactly know how to inquire about the destination of his host, or the absence of his friend, without disclosing more of the object of his visit than he considered it either necessary or judicious just at that period to develope.

"You came by the railroad, colonel," said Lady Cramly; "delightful conveyance!"

"Can't say I think so, my lady," said Bruff. "Didn't see the beauties of it."

"Seraphine my daughter," said Lady Cramly, "and I, have travelled a vast many miles by it—thousands I may say—and we never were in the slightest degree inconvenienced. To be sure the people knew us, and every accommodation was afforded us;

but besides that there is a sensation—a sort of *feeling* not only of certainty of achieving your object in a journey, but doing it with all its rapidity, without fatigue. I think it exceedingly—exceeding—"

"There's a good deal of noise about it," said Bruff.

"Yes," said the lady, "there *is* noise—"

"And smell."

"Yes," said Lady Cramly, "and smell, I admit."

"And you have no great opportunity of seeing the country as you pass through it," said the colonel.

"Oh dear no," said Lady Cramly. "I never venture to look out. The dear duke—Seraphine's godfather—who first induced me to go in one of them, told me never to look out."

"That'll do, my lady," said the colonel. 'I think in future I shall stick to the old mode of going, if I can."

And then followed the usual common-place sort of discussion, and declaration that the attempt to travel by our universally acknowledged admirable roads would be wholly fruit-

less—that all our excellent inns, together with the once wealthy and respectable towns in which they stood, would be deserted, and the population of the empire would be dragged through noxious tunnels, or over perilous ridges, across lines of country so remote from civilization and society, that in case of accident or delay they would find themselves alone and helpless even in the middle of the day, and if visited with any one of the numerous calamities by which this new-fangled mode of travelling is so pre-eminently distinguished, driven to avail themselves of the aid of a switch-guarding watchman, or the doubtful accommodation of a station-house stretcher.

In this conversation Bruff continued to join, occasionally talking to his daughter in broken sentences, evidently wishing to say more than he well could "before company," and not desiring to take her out to a private conference, because, as far as every thing presented itself to his eyes, there could be no need of anything like remonstrance or scolding; and if there were not, he had no need of talking to

her: and so the Behemoth went on wondering why Smylar should have led him into a scrape out of which he did not at all see how he could get. At last he ventured to inquire when Amersham was expected back.

"Oh, before supper," said Emma; "our old-fashioned meal; he is gone on a visit of good-nature to a future connexion of yours. Don't blush, my dear Jane. Poor Mr. Frank Grindle, whom we expected here, sent him word that he was exceedingly ill, and could not come over to us; and my good man—who *is* a good man—went over to see him this morning, for he is alone with his *homme d'affaires*, settling his late uncle's estates, and all that; and he thought he might perhaps be useful to him, if not in business, at least in diverting his mind while he was an invalid."

"So," thought Bruff, "then the man has never been here after all. Smylar's a fool; and I am dragged away from the *soirée* of Lady Gramm."

"Grindle," said Lady Cramly, "where do I know the name of Grindle? I know it from the famous cough-drops made by that admir-

able chemist in Pall-mall; but there is a Sir George Grindle, isn't there? Oh yes, the father of your friend, true."

Jane felt herself much as Saint Lawrence must have felt in the early stage of his martyrdom.

"Don't you recollect, Seraphine," continued the voluble lady, "our seeing that pretty creature at Versailles—Mrs. Grindle? She was the daughter-in-law of Sir Somebody Grindle; was *that* Sir George?"

"I don't recollect, Ma'," said Seraphine.

Bruff knew enough of the affair of the *nominal* Mrs. Grindle, coupled with the locality, to be rather anxious to change the subject of conversation. "So," thought he to himself, "Mr. George has carried the matter with a high hand indeed;" and Jane, in her placid way, cast her mild yet intelligent eyes upon papa, in order to ascertain if he were at all affected by that which, in her mind, was all at once associated with the brief tour made by her intended husband on the continent.

"She was exceedingly nice and *naïve*," said Lady Cramly. "I think it was the Prince de

Joinville who pointed her out to me one night at the Tuilleries. She came to Paris with—I forget who—Seraphine, do you recollect? I believe I got her the invitation. She was so exceedingly genteel. Oh! the nicest creature I ever saw, except the Duchess de Débonnaire —my greatest pet. We were only at Versailles one day, but this dear little half-English, half-French woman quite won my heart."

"Nice company you must keep," thought Bruff, being perfectly well satisfied of the identity of the person; and not knowing the extent of the discursiveness of Lady Cramly's fancy, he began to consider as much as he could as to the character of the court of the Citizen King.

"Large fortune, I am told," said Bruff, rather wishing to change the topic of conversation, "Frank gets by his uncle's death?"

"Very considerable indeed," said Mrs. Amersham, "and he is such a delightful person—"

"Ah, that'll do," said Bruff. "I know very little of him. We have seen him once or twice, haven't we, Jane?"

"Twice or three times," answered Jane.

"Have you heard from George to-day, Jenny?" said the colonel.

"No, sir," said Jane.

The question and answer appeared to be leading the conversation into what might be considered family topics, and a subsequent exchange of looks between Lady Cramly and Mrs. Amersham indicated the propriety of leaving the colonel and his daughter *tête-à-tête* —the thing of all others Jane would have given the world to avoid. Still his unusual and unexpected visit in itself implied something—what, Mrs. Amersham could not comprehend, nor could Jane.

"I hope," said the lady of the house, "that you mean—now we *have* got you here—to stay some time with us."

"Why," said Bruff, looking exceedingly awkward, and as if he devoutly wished he never had come, "if I bore you with my society till to-morrow after breakfast, I am afraid I must not indulge myself any longer. I must be in town by three or four."

Simultaneously Jane, Emma, Lady Cramly, and her daughter, all thought in various and

different degrees of energy—"Why did you come?"

We happen to know: and we happen to know also, that he came charged with all the powder—or rather power—of his paternal violence, to fulminate his rage upon his poor innocent daughter, for encouraging the advances, or rather enjoying the society, of Mr. Francis Grindle. His officious counsellors had been over-reached, and here he was—of course welcomed in a house, under the roof of which his only daughter was an inmate; but a visit of *his* being so unusual, its effect was proportionably remarkable, its object and intention turning out complete failures. All he wished or cared for was the return of Amersham, as the first step in his progress to his bed-room, in which, whether with or without supper, he devoutly wished himself.

"Jane, dear," said Mrs. Amersham, "I have no doubt you and papa have fifty things to talk over, so go your ways; you will find the little octagon room lighted and quite at your service. Amersham won't be long now, so you had better lose no time, as the colonel seems obliged to leave us to-morrow."

Bruff had nothing to say to his daughter—Jane had nothing to say to her father; but the common observances of society rendered their availing themselves of Mrs. Amersham's proposal a matter almost of necessity, and so they did retire to talk over family concerns; a move which gave very great relief to Bruff, who, as we have before remarked, found himself in a false position.

"A very fine-looking man, Colonel Buff," said Lady Cramly.

"Bruff," said Emma.

"Bruff—yes, Bruff; I beg pardon," said her ladyship. "He reminds me very much of Prince Vildovontdozich—you remember *him*, Seraphine? He was an ill-used man, as I fancied, and I told the Emperor of Austria that he ought to do something for him. The very next week, he ordered Metternich to make him—I forget at the moment what—either a field-marshal or an archbishop. Do you recollect, child, which?"

"No, Ma'," said Seraphine.

"I have got it down in my diary," said Lady Cramly. "I never saw a greater like-

ness—if he had but mustachios, it would be perfect."

"But," said Emma, "do Archbishops in Austria wear mustachios?"

"It depends entirely upon the particular regulations of the different chapters," said Lady Cramly. "The exalted aristocracy with which Seraphine and I exclusively lived, do I believe exactly as they please; at least *M.* seemed to think so. Seraphine, you know whom I mean by *M.?*"

"Yes, Ma'," said Seraphine.

"But," said Emma, "what Mrs. Grindle was that which you saw in France?"

"Oh, such a love of a creature!" said the enthusiastic traveller; "so pretty, and so clever, and so nice; you can quite imagine a pretty dear English thing with nice French manners. Who first presented her to me, Seraphine?—wasn't it the Duc de Falderall?"

"No, Ma'," said Seraphine; "we first met her in a shoemaker's shop in the Rue Richelieu."

"Stuff! my dear child," said her mamma, "I am talking of Versailles, where she was

living with her mother. I quite forget at the moment, but I am almost sure it was the Duc de Falderall."

"And what did she call herself?" said Emma.

"Mrs. Grindle," replied Lady Cramly, "daughter-in-law of a baronet here. Of course living in the society I always do, and treated with the distinction not only due to my personal rank but my literary character, I live with none but the best of people; and I tell you what, my dear Mrs. Amersham—when a woman like me has got a name, and is able to represent the real state of great nations from the highest authority, and upon the best information, she becomes both loved and feared, according to the parties in which she mingles. Rely upon it, that my next work will far exceed my first. When that was published, my poor dear Sir Ferdinand was alive, and he checked my ardour, and what he called 'toned down' my pictures of foreign courts. Now I am left alone, I will prove to the world how well I deserve the honours, distinctions, and decorations which have been showered upon me."

"I have no doubt of *that*, my dear Lady Cramly," said Emma; "but I am exceedingly anxious to know, if you have not been somehow imposed upon by this fascinating young lady, whom, as Seraphine says, you met in the shoemaker's shop."

"Imposed upon!" said Lady Cramly; "*I* imposed upon in a foreign capital!—My dear Mrs. Amersham, do you imagine, with the resources I possess, the position I hold, and the credentials I command, that *I* can be imposed upon? I certainly may have confused myself about presenting the dear interesting creature to my gracious friend Phil at the Tuileries; but I cannot mistake her presentation to *me* by the Duc de Falderall.—You are *so* stupid, Seraphine, dear—you never recollect any thing;—and yet," added she, turning to Mrs. Amersham, "the men think her so wonderfully clever."

"I perfectly recollect," said Seraphine, "two or three days before we left Paris, an extremely pretty woman, with a lady who seemed to be her mother, coming into a shoemaker's shop where we were, in the Rue Richelieu, and you made a sort of acquain-

tance with her. I liked her—you found out her name, and the day before we actually did leave Paris we went to Versailles, and there we met her in the gardens, and you renewed your acquaintance with her, and we walked together."

"Yes, child," cried Lady Cramly, "but the Duc de Falderall—"

"Was walking with us also," said Seraphine; "you had just been introduced to him by Monsieur Le Snob, a sous-lieutenant in his regiment, who had got us leave to see the grand Ircanor, and—"

"Oh child, child, you have no memory at all," said Lady Cramly; "you have forgotten all the circumstances—all the names, and all the localities—that is the advantage of keeping a diary."

Just at this period, the large and disagreeable colonel, having had his "say" out with his daughter, with whom, as it grieved him to think, he could find no particular fault, returned with her to the drawing-room, Jane wearing on her usually placid brow a somewhat anxious and nervous contraction. Her eyes rested on those of Emma.

The colonel seemed resolved to be good-humoured. He knew that he was well housed for the night, and although he might to a certain extent be beaten as to the object of his visit, its result proved that he had no real reason for alarm; and so he came into the *salon* rubbing his great hands joyously, and was received cordially by his hostess. Whereupon he began to talk big and loud, and feel himself at home, and would perhaps have pursued that course some time longer, had not the ringing of bells, and the barking of dogs, announced the arrival of the master of the house.

Welcomed to his own hearth and home was Amersham, as such a man must be. He certainly started at seeing the colonel—however, he was "too happy;" and so, as soon as possible, the customary supper was announced, and without the waste of many previous words, the party were seated.

As they were going to this social and sociable meal, Jane laid her hand upon Emma's arm—bringing to mind something which Smylar once had said with regard to George Grindle's dissolute conduct—and whispered,

"Emma, what does that woman mean about the lady from Versailles?"

"Mean!" said Emma, bursting into a fit of laughter, "who can tell *what* she means? she never spoke one word of truth in the whole course of her life!"

But where *was* Mr. Francis Grindle? *How* was he? and why was he not there?



CHAPTER XVII.

THE questions with which our last chapter closes were precisely those which Colonel Bruff most particularly desired to ask his host, inasmuch as besides having taken the trouble —for pleasure to *him* it certainly was none— to pay the Amershams a visit, in order to find something out, which it evidently appeared did not exist, he had also written to Sir George, and his hopeful son at Brighton, detailing his intentions, and moreover giving his reasons for putting them into execution; so that as it appeared to him at the moment, he had not only made himself a fool on the main point, but had exerted his energies in order to record his folly, by communicating to the Grindles the object of his rural excursion.

And now, where *was* Frank Grindle? and why was he *not* where he had been invited and was expected?

Annoyed by his absence, and alarmed at his silence, Amersham had, as we know, resolved to visit him, in order to offer him assistance, advice, or consolation, whichever he might appear to require. He went, and found him perfectly well in health, although certainly not in spirits, and on the very point of writing him a letter marked "*private and confidential*," the contents of which, however, in consequence of his arrival, were thrown into the form of conversation.

"My letter," said Frank, "would have explained to you the difficulties by which I am assailed; and although delighted to see you here, and most grateful for your considerate attentions, I think I could have expressed myself better in writing than in words, because what I have to say involves, as I feel, something exceedingly like an imputation of vanity, which I most earnestly and anxiously should wish to avoid. However, since you *are* here, you shall know my feelings, and of course my intentions."

"I think," said Amersham, "as to the imputation of vanity, you may set your heart at rest; for let your determination be based on what it *may*, I will stake my existence that vanity has no share in the decision."

"Well then," said Frank Grindle, "if you give me as much credit for the absence of vanity as I give *you* credit for sincerity, I will explain to you briefly and concisely the cause of my absence from your house. The fact is simply and plainly this: you have, as you told me in your hospitable invitation, a young lady staying with you who is engaged to my brother."

"Well," interrupted Amersham, "that was the very reason I expected you. In families—"

"Families," again interrupted Frank; "I anticipate what you are going to say; but such families as ours, my dear Mr. Amersham, are luckily not often to be found. Every action of my life, even from my earliest youth, has been misjudged by my father, and misrepresented by others of my connexions. In short, I will be candid and plain with you at once: such is the spirit of opposition which exists towards me, that although—and this is the

point upon which I feel it difficult to touch —I have not seen my future sister-in-law, Miss Bruff, more than three or four times, I am convinced that my going to you while she is your guest, would be construed into an attempt to thwart the views of my father and brother, and to secure her affections for myself; although I do assure you that —"

"I want no further confidence," said Amersham; "I see the position in which you feel yourself placed, and even although the circumstance deprives us of the pleasure of receiving you, I am not sorry, since such are your feelings, that I mentioned her being with us. She is, as *we* have known for many years, a most delightful person."

"The extent of my wishes," said Francis—not, however, that the expression of his countenance altogether verified his admission,—"is, that she may be happy with my half-brother. He is clever, gay, popular, and dissipated; but I *do* fear that for domestic happiness he is not entirely calculated. However, as I am not going to *you*, I propose to-morrow starting to my father at Brighton, where, as of course you know, he and George are stay-

ing. I will once more tender the olive-branch, and endeavour, now that I am actually in possession of a much larger fortune than I ever coveted, to see if I can convince them of the sincerity of my affection, and as regards my father, the perfect feeling of duty which I owe him. I admit that neither the pursuits nor associations in which *they* delight are compatible with my feelings—not only of propriety, for I am no preacher—but with my ideas of rational comfort or reasonable pleasure. I have been trained in a different school, and, to what they consider my shame, am of a domestic turn. I love science and the arts, and esteem all those who are eminent in them, and find delight in the society of those who have the means and inclination to enjoy and encourage them. Such feelings lead me into totally different circles of society from those in which they move; and hence, for no reason which can be reasonably adduced, I am denounced as a rebel, and an opponent to all their wishes. Not I;—all I ask is, let *me* go my own way, having not the slightest inclination to interfere with theirs. Hence have arisen our differences, I believe; and, as I tell you, if I

ever venture to remonstrate—which is the 'very head and front of my offending'—upon the language in which George is in the habit of indulging, my presumption is treasonable. Thus, my dear Mr. Amersham, I have for some time past considered it wiser and better, and even more dutiful, to deny myself that which, under any other circumstances, would be my greatest pleasure—a constant intercourse with my nearest and—if they would let me so feel them—my dearest relations."

Amersham, who, although he had spoken much and frequently with Francis Grindle on the subject of the peculiarity of his position regarding his family during the illness of his uncle Mr. Leeson, at Broadstairs, had never brought him to particulars, saw at once the delicacy of his situation; but at the same moment he coupled in his mind with that delicacy a suspicion that, however gently he touched, or rather however scrupulously he avoided the point, he was not entirely unconscious of a preference in his favour, exhibited by Jane Bruff upon the three or four occasions of their meeting. What Mrs. Amersham suspected as to that feeling, we

need not repeat; nor perhaps had she even confided her suspicions to her amiable husband: certain however it is, that he left Francis Grindle to return home under the impression that *he*, Francis Grindle, did feel that he *was* preferred by her before his half-brother; and hence the conduct he pursued. He admired—as who would not?—the sweet, the gentle Jane. The softness of her manner, the total absence of artificiality, the kind consideration which marked every action of her life, the combination of attractions to which we have long since despaired of doing justice, had, such is the truth, won his heart; the struggle was to be made—he made it, and succeeded—and that, too, while taking much less credit with Amersham for his conduct than it merited.

So then *they* parted; Amersham returned home, and the next morning Frank proceeded to Brighton, on a visit to his father and brother; a proceeding which most unintentionally and inadvertently added considerably to the discomfiture of the gallant and disagreeable Colonel Bruff, who, not satisfied by simply availing himself of the news as to

where a mare's-nest was to be discovered, communicated to him through the activity of Miss Harris and the ingenuousness of Mrs. Smylar, had written off to Sir George Grindle all the particulars of Frank's undermining visit to the Amershams, and of his surprising activity in making a forced march to circumvent him.

So when during the evening Mr. Amersham mentioned the course which Frank Grindle had adopted, the gallant colonel, generally impenetrable to any thing like a consciousness of his own stupidity, felt exceedingly vexed and much mortified, and wished himself, with all his heart and soul, in the muslin-hung, pink-lighted boudoir of the verdant, yet venerable Lady Gramm.

But more embarrassments awaited the gallant and disagreeable colonel, consequent upon his needless expedition. His departure before breakfast on the following morning was imperatively interdicted by the host and hostess, and their commands were earnestly followed up by the supplications of his daughter, whose depression of spirits was the subject of general —if silent—remark, the cause of which, Mrs.

Amersham suspected to be neither more nor less than the defection of Frank Grindle. Perhaps upon this particular occasion Mrs. Amersham was not very far from sympathizing with her volatile husband. No matter: whatever really *was* the cause, the effect was unquestionable.

During the remainder of the evening it seemed as if the voice of Lady Cramly grated harshly upon Jane's ears; and yet she listened to what she rattled forth with a marked interest; she turned her mild yet radiant eyes upon Seraphine as if appealingly. But what had struck deep into her heart through her ears, was what had been said by the flippant, flighty dowager, which had passed away from the gay old body's recollection, and in the midst of the whirl and rattle of her untiring tongue, she never for a moment imagined that one of her off-hand diary dashes had completely beaten down poor Jane.

From the moment that the well gotten-up fibber, the lady tourist, spoke of the Mrs. Grindle whom she had seen in Paris, Jane's spirits sank. As we have already said, she coupled the fact—for she was too well-bred

to doubt Lady Cramly, whatever her intimate friends might do—with one of Smylar's hints as to some sort of connexion of George Grindle's; and she determined, as her father *had* come to visit them, that before he quitted the house she would endeavour to comprehend, if possible, the meaning of the lady's history; because, true or not true, she had stated that there *was* a Mrs. Grindle, a beautiful person, the daughter-in-law of a baronet. It was true at all events, that there was but one baronet of that name; and if Lady Cramly's history was not the truth, what *was?*.

It was in vain, later in the evening—indeed, just before they parted for the night—that Emma again endeavoured to persuade Jane to put no faith in any thing the accomplished tourist said. Jane was resolved to speak to her father on the subject, inasmuch as although Lady Cramly certainly had flourished off the beautiful creature at the Tuilleries, associated with princes, and "all that," the name was admitted to be correct, even by Seraphine, although the *venue* was laid by *her* in a shoemaker's-shop. However,

upon further questioning in the morning, Seraphine honestly admitted, that not being a tourist, and not keeping a diary, she certainly, as far as she was concerned, knew nothing of her own knowledge of the fact. She remembered an exceedingly pretty young woman, with a companion who appeared like her mother; and that after they left the shop, her mamma, the tourist, took up a small packet of shoes, which was directed for them to be subsequently called for, and read the address; but as for herself, having no ulterior views of astounding the literary world, she took no notice of the parcel, nor did she know what name was on it, nor did she—this was said more cautiously than reverently—believe that her mamma knew any more than *she* did.

Still, however, the impression had been made upon the mind of Jane, and there it remained, as did equally the determination to communicate that which she had heard to her father in the morning. She was quite aware of the difficulty of the task she had to perform, and proportionably prepared for the irritation and anger to which her even touch-

ing upon the subject would expose her. But Smylar's words still rang in her ears, and the knowing leer of her eyes yet glared upon her as she recollected—which she could not help doing—the remark she made as to the cruelty which her young lady's marrying George would inflict upon somebody; and so her young lady's resolution was not to be shaken.

And while all this was passing in her mind, Frank Grindle was being conveyed to the temporary home of his parent and brother-in-law; and in order to render the results of old booby Bruff's manœuvres the more completely absurd, he arrived on his filial visit at Brighton about three-quarters of an hour before Sir George and young Hopeful were about to start for Amersham's, in order to frustrate his underhanded schemes of treachery.

"Hey!" said Sir George. "What, Master Frank, *you* here?—What, cut across the country from the Amershams'? How are they?—how's your sister-in-law as is to be?"

"I should be glad to tell you, my dear father," said Frank, "but I have not been

there, nor have I had any intention of going there."

"O, come, I say," said George, "you *are* going it, Frank. Well, how are you?"

"I merely repeat, my dear George," said Frank, "that I have not been at Mr. Amersham's since the funeral of my poor uncle, although he was good enough to press me to go over."

The father and son exchanged looks, and the son winked.

"Poor uncle!" said the son, "rich you mean. Well, but I say, we're deuced glad to see you—arn't we, governor?"

"I am," said Sir George. "Give us your hand, my boy; I wish you joy of your succession."

"I assure you," said Frank, "it is more than counterbalanced by the loss I have sustained."

"Tumty, tumty, ti!" said George; "that won't do. No; an uncle is an uncommon interesting kind of codgering relation—but stumpy *is* stumpy."

"I look at it, George," said Frank, "with

comparative indifference. If it affords me the opportunity of extending my sphere of usefulness, I shall rejoice, but else —"

"Else!" interrupted the baronet, "extend your sphere of usefulness!—hang it, you may *do that* forthwith: charity begins at home—I'm stumped—so is George—nothing but the girl—the—what do you call her, George? Jenny Jonkanoo—nothing else will; and as we hear she is all over head and ears in love with *you*, why we were in a considerable stew when we heard you were gone to meet her."

"I had no intention of doing so," said Frank. "Her father, I hear, is at Amersham's."

"Yes," said Sir George, looking at his son.

"Ye—es," replied the son, drawlingly; "and a pretty sort of a donkey *he* is."

This was the sort of family conversation, from which poor Frank's feelings always revolted. It was carried on in the usual tone. Here was a man, disagreeable and stupid enough, as we have already seen; but standing in a position relating to *them*, which ought, even in decency, to have secured him

from such remarks. What must he have experienced as they proceeded, and Sir George said,

"Well, how did the funeral go off?"

"Sir?" said Frank.

"The funeral," said Sir George; "I should have been glad to have gone to it, and so would George, only it is so like humbug—weeping for a chap one doesn't care for. All smart, I suppose, and well got up."

"Indeed," said Frank, "my feelings were too much and too deeply interested in the —"

"O dear, dear," said George, affecting to cry; "I'm quite upset; ring the bell, governor—let's have some soda-water and brandy to brace us up."

Frank said no more; his treatment by his father and brother was as it always had been, and he now almost repented that he had been voluntarily subjected to what could only be felt by himself, and considered by others, as outrages of the coarsest nature upon his duty and affection.

"But without joking"—said Sir George.

"My dear father," said Frank, "I am in no humour for joking. Meaning to go over

to France for a week or two, I thought I would take my departure from Brighton, in order to give myself the opportunity of seeing you, and of assuring you and George that the great object of my life will be to prove to you how truly and sincerely I admit and feel my duty to my parent, and how glad I shall be at all times throughout my life to prove an affection, which it is the greatest pain of my existence to believe has been doubted."

"Well said, parson!" cried Sir George.

"Amen," said his son. "Here comes the soda-water, and I'll tell you what, Frank, if you want to show your affection to *me*, fork out a bit. You were always a steady goer—five per cent satisfy you, eh?—try eight rather than not please you. Five thousand is all I want till after the girl and I are settled; and I can hand you over a policy on the governor's life for the amount."

"Indeed, George," said Frank, "this is exceedingly painful, and—"

"Take it easy, young man," said George, "you can't lay out your money to better advantage; can he, governor?"

"*I* think not," said Sir George.

. "I assure you I know nothing about the property to which I have succeeded," said Frank, "nor at this moment do I care."

"Then you'll be smashed by your attorney," said George. "If you are at all worried with business, I'll take charge of it for you, and—"

"Pray forgive me," said Frank. "When I came here I did not anticipate the subjects likely to be selected for our conversation; and I must beg, simply out of respect to the memory of him who is gone, that they may be changed."

"That's it, governor," said George, "the chap what has it, won't part with it."

"Well," said Sir George, who with all his recklessness began to think the conversation was not quite what it ought to be, "when do you start for France?"

"To day," said Frank; "the steamer, I suspect, is nearly ready to get off."

"I say, governor," said George, "have you anything to send to Versailles?"

"No, no," said the baronet, somewhat more snubbishly than was his wont when speaking to his heir, "nothing, unless *you* have."

This alternative was accompanied by a look such as was seldom given by him to his favourite; it evidently meant, "hold your tongue, you fool."

"I suppose now, every body goes to Versailles," said George, neither subdued by his father's looks, nor restricted in his allusions by what, for many reasons, ought to have been his own prudence and judgment.

"I am not going to France to see sights," said Frank; "I am going to Paris rather on business."

"Ah well, then," said George, "there's a museum at Versailles, dogs with double heads, great creaturs moreover that lived before this globe was created, with feet and toes specially shaped out for waiting in the mud till the world was ready for them to get into; and when it was all rolled up in prime order they found out it was no go, and so they were turned into stones: you know the whole history: it's uncommon queer, but the more queer the more curious—that's my notion."

"And so," said the baronet, reverting to past topics, and that in a manner implying a doubt as to the fact previously stated by his

son, "you really have not been at the Amershams'?"

"I have already said so," replied Frank. "They were exceedingly kind to me in the days of my grief, and I should have been too happy to pay them a visit at their own house, but circumstances prevented my doing so."

Sir George and his hopeful heir again exchanged looks, which were not altogether lost upon Frank, who having done what he felt was his duty, and having been received and treated exactly as he expected, expressed his apprehension, that if he protracted his stay much longer he should lose his passage; and he made preparations for his immediate departure from his "paternal roof," for so it was, although it at the moment covered a Brighton lodging-house, and offered him neither shelter nor solace such as might have cheered and charmed him, or wooed and won him with that hearty welcome, the feeling of which is associated with such a domicile.

In fact, the reception Frank met with was most assuredly not calculated to induce him to lengthen his stay, even had he not been compelled by the regulations of the steam-

boat people to be on board at a particular time. Sir George certainly did exhibit so much of paternal affection as produced the offer of walking down to the pier with his son to "see him off;" but the heir and future head of the house voted that proceeding a bore, and remained in his slippers and *robe de chambre*, unwilling, if not incapable, of making so great an exertion as a proof of his fraternal regard and affection.

* * * *

But now at Amersham's what was doing meanwhile? Jane Bruff had, after breakfast, as we know, again consulted Emma on the subject so near her heart; and we also know they had made further inquiries of Seraphine: but the results of their consultations were not satisfactory to the kind and ingenuous Jane. She was determined; and when these quiet, placid young ladies *are* resolved, it requires a superhuman power to turn them.

Colonel Bruff, to begin with, was exceedingly out of sorts, and cross, and irritable. He ate his breakfast with an excellent appetite, because not having sufficient mind or intellect to be annoyed by anything, as sensitive people

are, he never failed to demolish his accustomed quantity of food; but it was quite evident that having totally failed in the object of his visit, and exposed his "talent" for prescience, judgment, and discretion to the baronet and his son, his whole object was to get away from the Amershams, and by returning to town and shifting the scene, get rid of the worry; and at the same time be enabled to fall foul of Mrs. Smylar for her false intelligence, which he felt the more inclined to do as his interest in Lady Gramm increased; or, rather—as he fancied—her interest increased in *him*.

The carriage was ordered at twelve. The colonel, instead of joining the circle after breakfast, was seen pacing the long gravel-walk of the flower-garden, evidently talking to himself, and suiting his action to his words energetically; by which mono-telegraphic exhibition it might be gathered, by those who were witnesses of his proceedings from the windows, that he was in the agonies of mortification at having been at once betrayed and exposed by the misinformation conveyed to him by his officious minister.

Jane, however, having made up her mind, thought that her father's walk would afford no bad opportunity of putting her scheme into execution; wherefore, arraying herself in a bonnet and shawl, she proceeded to join him in his excursion; and having passed through a shrubbery on his right, she, to use one of his own expressions, contrived to take him in flank, and before he was aware of her approach, he found her at his side.

"Well," said the Behemoth, in one of his least agreeable tones, "what do *you* want?—can't I be left alone for half an hour?"

"Why should you be left alone, my dear father?" said Jane. "While you are here, why should I not be with you?"

"Because I am not pleased," said the colonel. "I am vexed—I am worried by my family—I am deceived and exposed."

"By whom?" said Jane. "Surely I do not—"

"No—that'll do," said her father. "I'm not talking of *you*. No matter—I shall see about that. But when do you come back? I shall hear from Sir George to-day, I dare say.

Pretty joke too. What's the use of going on putting off this marriage?"

"The term," said Jane, "has been agreed to by all parties, and therefore there can be no reason—since, as it seems, nobody objects to its duration—to shorten it. Besides, my dear father, I have something to say upon the subject."

"There, that'll do," interrupted the colonel. "I'll hear nothing—not a syllable—not a monosyllable—I'm sick of it. There's treachery and falsehood, and all sorts of abominations going on, and I tell you I'm sick of it."

"What the treachery may be, my dear father," said Jane, "I know not. I am no party to it; and of falsehood, you, I am sure, will acquit me. But I have something to say which you must hear. Yes," added she, as she saw the storm gathering on the huge countenance of her lofty parent, "*must* hear."

"Must!" said Bruff. "Must, to a full colonel on half-pay!—that is an exceedingly strong expression. But why *must* I?"

"Because," said Jane, fixing her gazelle-like eyes on his face, "because your child's

happiness and your own comfort depend upon it. Has Mr. George Grindle no tie to any lady living in or near Paris?—is there no lady there who bears his name?"

This was a shot for which the full colonel on half-pay was not quite prepared.

"Tie—name—what?" said he, "at Paris?—what do you mean?"

"Don't you recollect," said Jane, "that Lady Cramly, who makes it her business, under the pretext of pleasure, to find out everything about every body, and sell her information to the best bidder, gave us a description last night of a Mrs. Grindle, who, she says, is a daughter-in-law of Sir George Grindle, and whom she met in Paris?"

"Lady Cramly!" said the colonel; "oh that's it, is it; that'll do. Why, Jenny, although I don't recollect ever having seen Lady Cramly till yesterday evening, I will venture any wager, even upon my short acquaintance with her, that not one word in fifty she utters is truth."

"But the name, father?" said Jane, laying her hand on his arm, and shaking her head doubtingly.

"There may be more than one," said the colonel.

"But, as was said last night, there is but one baronet of the name," answered Jane; "and besides, Smylar once said something to *me*—"

"Smylar *did*, did she?" exclaimed the colonel; "that'll do. She is a charming person, and a clever person, and prudent, and wise, and cautious."

"If this lady bears his name," said Jane, "she must be dear to him. She lives in France, father; he has been there recently, and is but recently returned. What was the object of his journey thither?"

And now the colonel, finding himself in a very peculiar position, resolved at once to do that which is considered in any society, but more especially in the army, "excessively ungenteel." What that *was* the reader will immediately discover. It was the result of a sudden thought—a master-piece of "strategy," as he considered it, the effect of which would be that of cutting two ways at once, or, as the saying goes, killing two birds with one stone.

"What—what," said the gallant officer, much softened in manner, "what did Mrs. Smylar tell you?"

"Nothing," said Jane; "nothing defined."

"Oh!" said the colonel, who was exceedingly puzzled how to manage his "manœuvre;" "but something hinted."

"A mere remark," said Jane.

"Well now, Jane," said the colonel, "you must promise me never to mention what I am going to tell you—at least till after your marriage—to George, or any body else. Of course when you two are man and wife, there will be—at least I hope so—no secrets between you; but till then it would be wrong to take notice of what might make a deuce of a stir-up in the family. What Lady Cramly said last night is more or less true—there *is* a Mrs. Grindle living in France."

"Oh! there *is*," said Jane: "and how then can I—"

"That'll do," said the colonel; "don't flurry yourself—don't make a fuss. You have nothing in the world to do with it—nor

with her—nor with any body concerned with her."

"But how, sir," said Jane, colouring with energy and something like anger, "how can I, with the knowledge that the man who is to be my husband—"

"Stop, stop, Jenny," said the gallant colonel, who had accidentally brought her to the very point to which he wished to bring her; "are there not *two* Mr. Grindles, sons of Sir George, eh?"

The question certainly staggered Jane.

"It is your duty, Jane," said the gallant officer, who saw the advantage he had gained, "to keep as still as a mouse upon this matter. *That* marriage has been the real cause of all the differences between Sir George and Frank; and, as Amersham told us, Frank is off for France this very day. What else kept him from coming here to see his future sister-in-law? Why his wife and child in France. But now mark, this is in

strict confidence, and I prohibit your mentioning it, even to your friend Mrs. Amersham."

"Surely, father," said Jane, "after what was talked of here last night, I might, in vindication of George himself, if with no other object, explain the circumstance at least to *her*."

"Have you any regard for young Frank, Jenny?" said the colonel, who had been instructed by Mrs. Smylar that she had a great deal.

Jane did not speak, but by her manner implied an affirmative.

"Well, then," said Bruff, "we are in hopes, now that the uncle is dead, to reconcile matters; but if one word of this affair goes abroad, all the arrangements will fail, and the curse of the father will fall on the son."

With all his stolidity, Bruff was sufficiently versed in some of the points of Jane's character to know where to plant his blows.

The first telling hit was that in which he induced her to believe that the disclosure of the history of the clandestine and still secret marriage would be prejudicial to Frank's comfort and happiness; the second with which he now followed it up was, in Jane's estimation, ten times more effective. That *she*, by any hastiness or indiscretion of hers, should bring down the malediction of the father upon his son, was an apprehension too dreadful to be endured by such a pure and holy-minded creature as she was; and she agreed with her parent, that she ought to say nothing about it, being satisfied that in point of fact the reason, whatever it was, which existed for its concealment, did not concern *her*; but at the same time wishing that Lady Cramly had been at Paris or any where else in the world, rather than at Amersham's, so that she might not have had the opportunity of hearing the story and unsettling her mind, which, after all, was not, as far as she is concerned, quite agreeably settled in the

sequel, by the explanation which established that Frank Grindle was a married man.

"Well, now, you see then," said the colonel, "under all these circumstances, and all that kind of thing, you had better take no notice of what I have said; let matters take their course, and when you are married and settled you may perhaps use your interest and influence to bring about a family reconciliation, which will be all exceedingly nice and agreeable, and just suit your views and inclinations."

Jane had certainly hitherto been accustomed to place implicit confidence in every thing her father said, and, as we know, was at all times ready to uphold his character, and vindicate his conduct, even while suffering herself under his austerity and tyranny; but there was a nervousness and restlessness in his manner upon the present occasion, a hasty anxiety to dismiss the subject, and an expression in his countenance, which, taken in connexion with her own estimate of Frank Grin-

dle's qualities, induced her for the first time in her life to question the entire accuracy of the history he had given her. Their *tête-à-tête*, however, was suddenly, and perhaps not inconveniently, broken up by the appearance of Mrs. Amersham, Lady Cramly, and Seraphine, on the walk where they were, as the colonel would have called it, "parading." As the enemy advanced, all Bruff said was, and that was said very significantly, "Now mind;" and he gave a kind of wink, something between the knowing and the authoritative.

Jane acknowledged the signal and said nothing, but, like "Cocky" in the fable, thought the more.

"Why," said Lady Cramly, whose voice had become to Jane more discordant than the scream of a pea-hen before rain, "you have been lecturing Miss Bruff so long, that we determined to rush in upon you and break up the dialogue."

This measure had in truth been suggested by Mrs. Amersham, who was quite aware that

such a *tête-à-tête* was seldom agreeable to Jane.

"Thank you, madam," said Bruff. "Just in time; for we had finished all we had to talk about—said our say out, as the saying goes, and I presume my carriage is waiting."

"You are determined then to run away, colonel?" said Mrs. Amersham, with as much hypocritical civility of manner as her ingenuousness enabled her to assume.

"Perhaps," said Lady Cramly, "if we were very much to intreat you, you would delay your departure. I remember once in Russia Prince Vlodimezinkskinoff came to the Rostwitziwagastodat Palace, where my little girl and I were staying, *en famille*, and he meant to stop only one day. He remained a week; although being, as you know, my dear Mrs. Amersham, one of the ministers at the time I speak of, he was nearly certain of Siberia for neglecting his duty."

"I am neither a prince," said Bruff, "nor a minister; and I moreover differ so far from

your Russian friend with the long name as this—he had to look after his master's business and stayed; I have to look after my own, and must go. That'll do, eh? That makes all the difference, my lady. However, Mrs. Amersham, I leave you Jane. She ought to be most grateful to you. Never saw her looking better in my life. She, however, will soon be taken from you when—"

"My dear papa," said Jane, "as you sometimes say, that'll do. Whenever you send for me home, I shall be found ready to obey your commands."

"That *will* do," said the colonel; "all I ask is obedience—no questioning—no reasoning—no looking to the right or to the left without orders. However, Mrs. Amersham, we shall expect you with her. You understand?"

Jane was suffering agonies of worry from the manner in which her father was hovering about the point, to her the most painful and delicate in the world; not to speak of her apprehension that Lady Cramly might revert

to the scene in the Parisian shoe-shop, and force on an explanation of the real circumstances, which would have been most disagreeable to her. However, Amersham joined them at the moment, and the colonel having received a filial kiss from his sensitive daughter, took leave of the rest of the party, his big heart full of anger with Smylar for having sent him down from London on a fool's errand, and at the same time beating with a triumphant feeling arising from the success with which, as he firmly believed, his calumnious imputations upon Frank Grindle had been received and believed by his confiding and unsuspecting daughter—perhaps it would be more just to say, his *hitherto* unsuspecting daughter.

The colonel went—they saw him off—the ladies kissed their hands, and Lady Cramly, who the evening before had pronounced him exceedingly like her ill-used friend, Prince Vildovontodozich, protested as he stepped into his carriage, that he might be mistaken

anywhere for her dear pet Baron Rombledeedomble, who being one of the most celebrated ornithologists in the world, had given her a golden eagle, and two humming-birds, which she had presented to the Zoological Society of Zeuta, in Hungary, of which she was made an honorary member, and had received a gold medal as big as a soup-plate, "stricken," as her ladyship said, "in commemoration of the victory gained there by Prince Eugene over Mustapha II. in the year 1697."

Emma looked at Jane, and Seraphine stooped down to admire a splendid azalia, and the colonel was driven off.

Emma, who knew every turn of Jane's countenance, and who could read in the beautiful index of her mind the thoughts which were passing there, could not observe the expressive gaze with which her eyes were first fixed on, and then followed the carriage which contained her father, without being certain that something unusual had occurred; that a change in her feelings towards him had

somehow been wrought; and with that consciousness, her anxiety to get rid of her present associates temporarily, so as to secure a few minutes' quiet "talk" with her by themselves, became proportionably strong; but, as is always the case, the lady and her daughter and Amersham remained immoveable—at least they moved about, but still combined, and in company.

Whether it is that under such circumstances people *do* linger, and are slower in their proceedings than is their ordinary wont, or whether the anxiety for their departure or dispersion, as the case may be, turns seconds to minutes, and minutes to hours, it is perhaps scarcely worth while seriously to investigate; but never in all the course of their acquaintance had Lady Cramly's romances appeared so long and so uninteresting to Mrs. Amersham, nor her husband's amiable attentions in walking with them so little gratifying. Emma wanted to know what *had* passed between Jane and her father, and at last a pro-

posal of Amersham's to pull Lady Cramly and her daughter down the river Yarrell to a romantic spot—full of fish too—called Penny's Hole, was accepted with delight by her ladyship, who declared, that except in steamboats on the sea for the purposes of transit, she had never been on the water since her friend Signor Deodato Phingerini, of Venice, had taken her in a gondola to see the beautiful effect of the moonlight on the Bridge of Sighs, upon which occasion she was obliged to leave her dear Seraphine at home for fear she might catch cold.

"Well now," said Emma, "now they *are* gone, what has your father been saying to you—any thing in connexion with his visit to *us?* What? Come, Jane—come, you cannot hide your thoughts from me—speak."

Jane at first, in recollection and consideration of her promise to her father, hesitated, and then refused positively and absolutely; but any body who could possibly imagine that, under the circumstances of such unbounded

and unrestricted friendship as theirs was, this reserve could be maintained, or this silence persisted in, must be mistaken. Accordingly after a time, and certain good and cogent arguments on the part of Emma why Jane should trust her, or rather why she should not withdraw from her, confidence which had existed for years, and never yet had been violated, Miss Bruff detailed all that had passed between her and her father during their morning walk, as far as she could recollect.

The effect the disclosure produced upon Emma was not exactly what Jane expected. Her own views and feelings of the case were, that no such person as this exceedingly pretty *naïve* half English, half French-woman existed, except in the fertile imagination of the diary-keeping tourist; and if Colonel Bruff had taken the line of inquiring whether any such person did exist, Mrs. Amersham, "knowing her friend," as she said the night before, would have been perfectly prepared to believe him; but the moment she heard

that the Behemoth admitted the existence of such a person, that moment did Emma believe there was something more in it than yet had met their ears.

"Was I then so exceedingly wrong," said Jane, "in expressing my anxiety to know something more upon the subject, when I spoke to you yesterday evening as we were going to supper?"

"Why," said Emma, "it turns out, my dear love, that you were *not;* but to those who know our fat and fair guest, any statement of hers is considered proof positive against a fact. But as you say your father allows that there *is* a Mrs. Grindle in Paris, as I have already said, the affair takes another aspect. I don't know, but from all I have seen—not much to be sure—of Frank Grindle—for Amersham calls him Frank, and so do I—I don't believe one syllable of the history."

"Then what does it mean, Emma?" said Jane.

"What did that amiable person, Mrs. Smylar, say to you," asked Emma, "with regard to this particular subject, which struck you so forcibly at the time, and which has retained its impression on your mind ever since?"

"I forget the words," said Jane, "but they conveyed to me the idea that Mr. George Grindle had formed some sort of attachment, and—"

"I see, I see, dear child," said Emma, "and all *that* is exceedingly probable; but let us think a moment; if that *should* be the case, as your father has explained away the history of this Versailles beauty, that can have nothing to do with *this* history. What I do *not* believe is, that the younger brother is married, or that he has any tie of any sort that is likely to attach him to any woman on earth—except, perhaps, one."

"Indeed!" said Jane, utterly unconscious of the full extent of the meaning of Mrs. Amersham, who, being the wife of the Mr.

Amersham who had visited Frank Grindle the day before, had, of course, (as married men of kind hearts and communicative dispositions, blessed with exceedingly pretty wives, with amiable characters, will no doubt readily believe,) been duly apprised of all that had happened during that visit, followed up by the expression of Amersham's own belief, that Frank, in spite of all that actually passed between them during his stay with him, was very much stricken with Jane Bruff. This *we* know, from our power of peeping into the history as it progresses; but Jane, with her sweetness of disposition and modesty of mind, scarcely felt conscious of her powers of captivation, or would ever perhaps have known how much, how truly, and how deeply she was loved.

We have lightly touched upon the beautiful sympathy and the charming communicativeness which exists between men and their wives, when that blessed confidence is once established, without which marriage

must be a curse and having; in the most delicate manner insinuated that Amersham, after retiring from the turmoils of the world, gentle as they were under his own roof, had told Emma all that had happened at Frank Grindle's during his visit,—who were there, —what he considered his views to be, and his high opinion of the honour and feeling which he so admirably and chivalrously displayed,—it perhaps would not be asking the reader too much to imagine, that on the evening of the day of Colonel Bruff's departure, in which Jane told Emma all that had passed between that distinguished officer and herself, when Mr. and Mrs. Amersham were again restored to the paradisaical occupation of that apartment which in less well-regulated houses is said to be set apart for the delivery of curtain lectures, Mrs. Amersham, actuated by an equally friendly and affectionate feeling towards Jane with that which she knew animated her husband as regarded Frank Grindle, might have — in

strict confidence — imparted all that Jane communicated touching the lady at Versailles.

Whether this fancy may be well founded or not, it is impossible to say. Amersham's house was the quietest of villas; it was all carpeted, and matted, and curtained, and squabbed, and not a sound was to be heard through the double cloth-doors with which all its bed-rooms were guarded from wind or noise; but certain it is that upon this special occasion, about an hour after its master and mistress were supposed to be asleep, these words were heard,

"Emma, love, that's an infernal—"

What the concluding monosyllable — for monosyllable we may be sure it was—might have been, we set not down here, for it has not been communicated to us; but *this* we know, that the exclamation applied to the statement of the big Colonel Bruff as to the French lady and Frank Grindle.

"My love," said Mrs. Amersham, "don't

agitate yourself — I quite agree with you."

"I wish it were morning," answered the agitated husband; "I will not suffer this to rest. The first thing, dearest Emma, I will do after breakfast is to inquire a little more into the business of the crack-brained woman we have here, of whose story, as you say, I should have thought nothing, if old Bruff" (and here, hear it not, ye good and pious; or if ye do, make allowance for excitement produced by right feeling and an earnest desire to do justice, Mr. Amersham apostrophised him in terms too strong to be written) "had at once denied the fact; but this shuffling and shifting—no, I care nothing for what happens—this shall be hunted out."

And so he went on declaring and resolving, until at last he fell asleep—an example which we hope for the sake of her health and comfort was speedily followed by his excellent wife.

In the morning our host was up early, and

the hours seemed to crawl till his large and intelligent guest was gotten out of bed by her maid. Seraphine was earlier in the field, but Seraphine was too quiet, too unpresuming, and too little inquisitive in herself to be able to answer Amersham's questions concerning the pretty Mrs. Grindle of Versailles. So Amersham talked to her of buds and flowers, and even of the fishes which they had seen in their yesterday's excursion; and Seraphine enjoyed this little morning *tête-à-tête.*

But it was not till after breakfast that Amersham brought Lady Cramly into play. Then, when she made her first appearance for the day, as much be-turbaned, and be-beaded, and be-bustled, as if she were prepared for a country assembly, *then* it was that he rolled her, as it were, out into the grounds—(who is the old joker who compares such a woman to a fillet of veal upon castors?)—and began by degrees, not to assail her too decidedly upon the subject, to touch upon Versailles and its

accessories, and thence leading her back again to Paris, contrived to lodge her in the shoe-shop in the Rue Richelieu.

The siege was well conducted, but the failure was signal; the tourist with the diary had totally forgotten all about the matter; she might have heard of, perhaps did see, a Mrs. Grindle, and she thought she had, and it was somehow connected with a shoe-shop; but wanting the curaçoa, and other generous stomachics, by which her ladyship was in the habit of supporting her mental energies in the evenings, the varnish of the picture being absent, she could give no very distinct account of the princes or the dukes of whom she had so flippantly discoursed the preceding night; but she still held out a hope to Amersham, by telling him that she thought it extremely probable that in the course of the afternoon she should recollect all about it; the fact being, that her mind was completely occupied during the day in arranging her papers, which she certainly should not have taken the trouble

of doing, but her dear "*Mett*" (as she called somebody) insisted upon her not permitting herself to quit the world without leaving it a treasure in the shape of her "Loose Thoughts upon the Governments of Europe," illustrated by Cruikshank. This *was* the work upon which she was engaged, only Mr. Amersham was bound in honour not to mention it.

"Emma," said Amersham, after having had some conversation with the agreeable *romancier*, "this woman's account of the meeting is exceedingly confused. I cannot make out what it means—I wasn't here last night when she talked of it, and this morning she seems not to recollect any thing about it. Rely upon it, the whole history, to use a brief, and by no means genteel expression—rely upon it, it is all fudge."

"My dear Amersham," said Emma, "I should think so too; but if Lady Cramly has forgotten what she said last night about it, you seem to have forgotten what I said last night to *you*—if there is no ground for

the story, why does old Bruff admit its truth?"

"Ah!" said Amersham, recollecting that he had, perhaps, not paid sufficient attention to all the details, "there you have it—I suppose poor dear Jane is worried about it?"

"Why," said Emma, "I have told her, it is no business of hers."

"Nor is it a business of Frank Grindle's," said Amersham; "rely upon it, here is something more to be discovered than first strikes us. I would this instant start off to follow Frank Grindle, whose heart is all truth, and whose mind is all candour; I would ask him, and be sure of an answer: but he is gone—he is at this moment in France."

"And if he were not," said Emma, "what possible right, my dear, good Amersham, have you to ask any such question? What claim can you have upon him? or even if you had, what interest have you in his proceedings, to inquire into his family circumstances or connexions?"

"But, my dear Emma," said Amersham, "after our yesterday's interview, I have a right, for my own sake, and as vindicating myself from an imputation of being trifled with and imposed upon—by Heaven, I say I have a right to know from him whether the reasons he so generously—at least to all appearance—and so cordially gave me for not fulfilling his promise to visit us, are genuine and true; and after hearing what I have heard this morning, I must say that he seems to have been trifling with me."

"Now, my dear Amersham," said Emma, "do not needlessly run yourself into a personal quarrel—which I see will be the end of all this—about nothing. Supposing all that Lady Cramly says is true, and he *is* married, why need he have opened his heart to *you* about it? He might have given you his reasons for not coming here while Jane *was* with us, with just as much reason and justice as any other people you invite to your house plead illness, or, as they call it, 'a prior en-

gagement,' because they wish to decline coming. As the matter has nothing to do with Jane, who is not going to be married to *him*, and as it can make very little difference to you whom he marries, leave the matter where it is."

"No," said Amersham, "I cannot consent to *that*, because I suspect there is some juggle in it: and you yourself say, that Jane thinks her father is not quite so steady in his statements as usual; and I am sure, my dear girl, you agree with me that we ought to do any thing rather than suffer that poor dear child's comfort and peace of mind to be endangered. No; I will put off writing to Frank till to-morrow's post, because it will give me the opportunity of again talking to the tourist at a period when, as it seems, even her poor good-natured daughter admits she is most communicative. After I get what I can pick up from her, I certainly *will* write, and I can,

I am sure, confide in Frank for a true and ingenuous answer."

This dialogue, although it had not been stormy, had been animated. Amersham was easily excited; Emma was excited too in endeavouring to calm *him;* and when this conflict of words, which had been carried on rapidly, ceased, Emma got up from the sofa, and was leaving the room. Amersham remained, with his brows contracted, and his lips compressed.

Just as Emma got to the door, she suddenly paused, and after a moment's reflection, returning to her husband, said,

"My dear love, it just strikes me—if you really *are* so anxious to know more about this business, why not write to Miles Blackmore? he is either in, or near Paris, with nothing on earth to do—he would be delighted with the mission."

"Emma," said Amersham, starting up in

ecstasy, "Emma, my darling girl, you have hit it. What was I thinking of?—to be sure —the wisest thing on earth to do. I will write to him this very night."

CHAPTER XVIII.

In descriptions and classifications of the various degrees of anger, a variety of terms are used—"a towering passion," "an infernal rage," and half a dozen others, perhaps not altogether so delicate in their phraseology. If the best judges of such matters were to have adopted the strongest possible language as descriptive of Colonel Bruff's boundless impetuosity when he returned to town, they would best have "suited the word to the action."

"So, Mrs. Smylar," said the veteran, with-

out waiting for the accustomed salute—we speak militarily—"so, a pretty fool you have made of *me*. Induced me to move my corps bodily upon false information—sent me to Amersham's to discover, confound, and expose Frank Grindle as a deceiver, an interloper, and a traitor, and no Frank Grindle was to be seen!"

Smylar, whose presence of mind (as imperturbable impudence is sometimes called) was very remarkable, instead of sinking at old Bruff's feet, like Fatima under the rage of Blue Beard, as she had frequently done at Bullock's-smithy, stood patiently looking him in the face, with a wondering expression of countenance, and a most provoking fixedness of eye; and then with unmoved muscles, except, indeed, some little quivering of her lips, which she compressed as firmly as she could, she threw herself into a theatrical attitude, and repeated the well-known lines from

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"Tom Thumb," in which admirable burlesque she had so often figured:

> "Thus far with victory our arms are crown'd,
> For though we have not fought, yet have we found
> No foe to fight withal."

"That's all mighty well," said Bluff, "and you are a vastly clever person; but you have put me to inconvenience, and moreover made me look exceedingly ridiculous, by sending me down on a fool's errand to a house which I rarely visit, and in which I haven't been for several years. They were as much astonished at my arrival as—"

"The frogs in the pond," said Smylar, who, relying upon her influence, was all for a quarrel, "when King Log tumbled in amongst them."

"That'll do, Smylar," said the colonel, "as far as *that* goes; but that's not all—no—not half. I find that you have thought proper to

let Jane know the history about George's *ci-devant* young friend in France."

"Me!" said Smylar. "Why, colonel, you have been bitten by some mad person while you were away! Why should *I* say any thing about it?"

"Jane says you did," said the colonel.

"Is it not rather more likely," said Smylar, "that her confidential maid, Harris, may have hinted it to her?"

"How should Harris know any thing about it?" asked the colonel.

"How!" said Mrs. Smylar. "She is upon tolerably good terms with Mr. Rumfit, and *he* to my knowledge has been before now with Mr. George Grindle's man to the villa in the Regent's-park."

"That'll do," said the colonel. "If I could do as I liked, I would soon put an end to that confederacy, and send them both packing; but as it is—"

And here the gallant and disagreeable offi-

cer paused—his mind, as he called it, being full of the difficulties which he had himself created. He had, not perhaps fancying that so much of the true history was actually known, committed himself to his daughter—she that was all truth and honour—in a direct point-blank falsehood, and a falsehood which might be called of a "double dye," inasmuch as it not only went to deceive his innocent child, but to cast a stigma upon an excellent man, who, in addition to all his claims upon society generally, possessed that of being the nearest living connexion, except his father, of the very man who in a few days was to become his son-in-law.

"Well," muttered the great officer, "so let it be then. All young men have their indiscretions. Marriage will cure George, and the less said about it the better."

"I," said Smylar, "am all for a quiet life—I wish to see things go well and respectably in the family, and I would and will do

every thing to maintain its character. But it *is* hard—very hard—at a time when I am doing every thing I can to carry your views and wishes into effect—sacrificing every thing for you—to be charged with imprudence, or carelessness, or improvidence. Even if I *did* say any thing to Jane upon the subject, it was because I was certain she knew of it before. If I say I will do a thing, I will *do* it; but I must manage as well as act—it must be done my own way, or not at all."

They who know the sort of influence which such a woman as Smylar is calculated to obtain over such a man as Bruff, will perceive at a glance that he was again trapped—again netted; and worse would have been his fate had his fair minister been aware of the real "state of the case," as regarded the imputation he had only a few hours before cast upon Francis Grindle.

Nor was he—the great officer—at all easier in his mind even after their reconcilia-

tion had taken place with the usual ceremonies, and his mandate as to dinner had been issued. The more he reflected upon his indiscretion in adopting for a temporary purpose a falsehood which, let what might happen, must eventually be discovered, the more he thought—instinctively at least—in the spirit of the passage of Sir William Temple's, which he certainly had never read, "that one time or other truth will be uppermost, like cork, though kept down in the water;" and with this worrying feeling in his mind he began to calculate whether he had not better make a *confidante* of his tyrant fair.

But Lady Gramm would be looking out for him at her little *soirée*—could he resist? or, rather, could he contrive to go to it? It was evidently a sore point with Smylar; so he made up his mind to secure his safe-landing there, by dining at the Doldrum, and thence proceeding to her ladyship's agreeable circle, —a decision which again inflamed the active

housekeeper, who felt conscious that matters were drawing to a conclusion; and that unless she adopted some new and stronger expedient, the main object of her life would be lost—in fact, if something was not decided, as related to her interests, before Jane was married to George, her defeat in the great project seemed all but certain.

Under these feelings the colonel marched forth to dinner, and Smylar returned to her room, to hold a council with herself as to the best and most favourable course to pursue under all the circumstances.

Meanwhile poor Jane's thoughts dwelt upon scarcely any other subject than the "young lady at Versailles." Strange as it may seem, we certainly know that her father's statement, that the lady belonged to Frank Grindle, had by no means quieted her; in truth, from the most quiet and peaceful retirement—from the enjoyment of the utmost tranquillity of mind

—she had been suddenly and involuntarily plunged, as it were, into a vortex of difficulties, and plots, and counterplots, and concealments, and stratagems, wholly unconscious of their origin, contrivance, or object, but still aware that she had all at once become a person of importance which she never desired, and of observation and remark which she least in the world coveted; added to which was the impending certainty of her marriage. Was it a certainty? That was the question she now began to ask herself. Could she endure the misery which she felt must inevitably result from her union with George Grindle? could she induce herself, even upon the principle of self-preservation, to rebel against her father? These were the two main points on which she had never ventured to touch seriously with Emma;—but as the days rolled on, and the time drew near for the "nuptial celebration," she found her mind occupied by them more than she

fancied it possible it ever could or would have been.

How far she had gone in her communications with Mrs. Amersham we already know; how much farther she might propose to open her heart to her friend, we have yet to discover; certain however it is, that that friend was herself a little unsettled by the account of the beauty at Versailles, and more than angry that the history of the neglected lady should have been given to Frank; because, besides not believing it, the very doubt which it raised impeached her judgment, which she felt certain could not have been so faulty as to induce her to admit and acknowledge the esteem and respect with which their amiable neighbour at Broadstairs had inspired her, if he were capable of deserting so charming a person as Lady Cramly described that person to be; or, in fact, if he could have kept so remarkable a feature in his history undis-

closed to those whom he at least *seemed* to treat like friends.

While these things were " progressing," George Grindle—and *Sir* George particularly —began to get exceedingly nervous; for the worthy baronet had somehow heard that Ellen did actually assume George's name—a circumstance for which he had not been in the first instance prepared, and which, now the intercourse between France and England is so constant and perpetual, could not fail to become an immediate matter of notoriety on this side of the Channel. The effect which his enlightenment upon this point produced upon his mind was a ravenous desire to hurry as much as possible the marriage of his hopeful son; for amongst other subjects connected with the main one, the visit of Frank to France did not at all contribute to his comfort or security. George took things more easily than the governor, but even

he was slumbering in a treacherous tranquillity.

The English newspapers had announced the death of Mr. Leeson—those Ellen saw. If they had paused there, matters might have gone on quietly; but they went one step farther, and added, that in consequence of this calamitous event the marriage of Mr. Grindle, son of the baronet of that name, with the beautiful and accomplished Miss Bruff, was necessarily postponed for the present.

Quite certain that George would never desert her, but still more anxious to know all particulars, Ellen wrote to him, in answer to his affectionate letter announcing the demise of his uncle, to know what the paragraph in the English *Morning Post* (which she cut out and enclosed to him) could possibly mean. Happy was the sympathy which seemed to inspire all parties concerned in the affair. *His* answer was, that his half-brother Frank was about to be married to Miss Bruff. He

touched very lightly upon the event, but merely remarked hypothetically, that if he, George, had been going to be married to anybody, the death of old Leeson would not have induced him to put off the ceremony for half an hour.

This, flourished away with a promise to send over to her in a few days, was despatched, and as usual soothed and satisfied her unsuspecting mind. However, when Frank announced his projected visit to France, although George, as was his custom, put on a bold face, and laughed it off, he began to think that it might somehow cause an explosion. *If* Frank, as he himself had jokingly proposed to him to do, should go to Versailles, the name, the arms on his carriage, would at once awaken Ellen to the identity of the visiter. She would find him there not much after the fashion of a pleasure-postponed bridegroom. His name, as it was clear she openly used it, would catch his ears

—they might—would naturally meet—and then an interchange of intelligence upon "family affairs" would unquestionably produce a complete *bouleversement* of everything in progress. As for the matter of principle, we will say nothing about it; but as carrying on their plot, the coincidence is curious, that both father-in-law and son-in-law should have hit upon the same expedient of throwing the whole blame of the transaction upon the only really true, honourable, and high-minded man of the whole party.

"Governor," said George, after showing his worthy parent the letter and extract which he had just answered, as we have shown above, "governor, I think I have done that business clean—it'll come well off the bat, if—ay, there *is* an if—if Frank and the girl don't meet. I tell you what has just come into my mind, governor: let us beg him to come to the wedding. I'll do uncommon affectionate. His heart *is* one of what

they call the melters—a regular watering-pot in the sentimental line—lament past differences, hope for better days, eh?—so screw him back. He can't have anything to do in France; and if he has, what is that to us?"

"Why," said the worthy baronet, "to say truth, at first I felt rather glad that he was going, but you throw a new light upon the matter. Any *éclat there* would be bad—infernally bad—and when he was here he was quite in the right tone for coming round. Ah, suppose we write him a kind invitation—beg him to come, eh?"

"Why," said George, "I take it something must be done—it wouldn't be pleasant to have Nelly come over, as they say,

'From Calais to Dover,'

with the pledge in her lap—eh, governor?"

"Better a pledge than a duplicate," said Sir George, condescending to borrow a joke, "the light of other days."

"But then," said George, "the execution, as I call the wedding, isn't to 'come off' for a fortnight—a deuced sight of mischief may be done long before *that*."

"Frank said," observed Sir George, "that he was going to Paris on business."

"So he did," answered the son, "but nevertheless in a city where pleasure *is* the business of the day, and night too, the graver occupations of its visiters soon become wonderfully relieved. If he once gets fixed there, I'll back him in for three weeks or a month."

"I don't exactly see what's to be done," said the baronet.

"Can't we write him a history like that of the dead magpie?" asked the son.

"Dead magpie?" exclaimed Sir George, "I'm basketed."

"Why, have you lived all these years, begging *your* pardon," cried George, "without hearing the way the affectionate servant

broke bad news to his master?—it's as old as the hills. Young Squire Green, just such a turn-out as Frank, comes to his grandfather's place in the country,—met at the inn by old Dobbs the steward.

"'All,' says Dobbs, 'all here, sir, is right as right, excepting only that the magpie is dead.'

"'Oh, that all?' says the young chap, 'that's no great matter. What did the magpie die of?'

"'Eating too much horseflesh,' says Dobbs.

"'Where did he get that?' asks Green.

"'Surfeited himself off the coach-horses,' says Dobbs.

"'What killed them?' says Green.

"'Overworked, fetching water for the fire,' says Dobbs.

"'What fire?'

"'Up at the hall, sir,' says Dobbs.

"'What's the hall burned down?'

"'Yes,' says Dobbs.

"'How was that?'

"'One of the torches used at the funeral was left burning, and so set fire to it,' says Dobbs.

"'Whose funeral?' asks Green.

"'Your grandfather's, the squire's, sir,' says Dobbs.

"'What! is he dead?' eagerly asks Green.

"'Yes, sir,' answered Dobbs, 'he shot himself because his bank failed, and he was clear entire ruined out and out.'

"And so you see, governor, all the story comes out of the death of a magpie."

"'Gad," said the baronet, "I am afraid, with all your genius and imaginativeness, you will not be able to conjure up such a concatenation of calamities for poor Frank; he can afford to lose more magpies than one."

"So could I, *entre nous*," said George. "However, rely upon it, after Nelly's let-

ter, we are sitting on a barrel of gunpowder."

"Shall I run over to France," said Sir George, "and try to *bring* Frank back?"

This suggestion, off-hand as it was, did not appear altogether injudicious. George had taught Nelly to hate and fear his father, and was quite sure that if the governor could establish himself with Frank, it would answer the double purpose, not only of making *her* certain that *he* was the bridegroom elect, but of keeping them separate, so strong were her feelings of dread and dislike towards the father of her beloved, and the grandfather of Tiney.

This scheme was forthwith put into execution, and, by the strangeness of the coincidences which seem to pervade our narrative, the announcement of its "perpetration" by George to Jane in his letter to her of that day, did more than any thing else could do to ease her doubts and calm her apprehen-

sions as to the lady at Versailles. George, in his letter, informed her that his father would take his departure for France in the morning, having some business of importance to transact with his brother Francis. This statement brought conviction to her mind, that her father's history was, after all, the true one; and, indeed, the manner in which George—as well he knew how to do—gave a sort of colouring to the visit of his respectable parent to the French capital, made in her mind "assurance double sure;" and her answer to his letter was written in such a different tone, under the impression that George was really not what he had been represented, that the *aspirant* felt a very strong disposition to make his long-threatened visit at the Amershams', against which there certainly could be no possible objection under all the circumstances of the case.

At this period of our history, Mrs. Amersham was again placed in a very difficult

position with Jane, who of course communicated the intelligence she had received from George, and the "comfortable" feelings with which his letter had inspired her. As upon former occasions (as we have seen), Emma's whole object was to support poor Jane in what she could not now consider any thing but a trial; but with this anxiety she could scarcely assume a sufficient degree of placidity to cover the expressions of her apprehension that Jane's present views were mere delusions; she could not force herself to believe that Frank was in any way concerned in the Paris affair; and therefore it must be admitted that she was (to use a colloquial phrase) very like one of "Job's comforters" during the discussion of the question; only begging Jane to recollect that Mr. Amersham had written confidentially to Mr. Miles Blackmore, and that his answer would be with them in perfectly good time for the alleviation of all these anxieties.

There was something painfully pleasing—some feeling for which Jane could not account to herself—which she experienced whenever Miles Blackmore was spoken of; and she could not help thinking, that if she were likely to be subjected to be wronged in this, the most important business of her life, Miles Blackmore would see her righted. There was, when he was serious and energetic, something commanding in his tone and manner, and above all, he had inspired her with a sincere admiration of his high principle and uncompromising honour. It is odd enough that Tiney and he should have become such good friends on the voyage and journey, upon the results of which, as it seems, so much happiness or misery is somewhere depending.

By the earliest steamer Sir George Grindle took his departure for Dieppe, not altogether certain that he might not overtake Frank, halting on the road to Paris. It was to be sure a most extraordinary expedition, consi-

dering that for so many past years, his main object had been to avoid his second son. But there was a great stake to play for; and, in fact, the importance of the marriage of George with Jane had latterly become much greater, seeing that more money had been raised by the father and son upon the prospects which the completion of that union opened to view.

The plot—or, as Mrs. Smylar would perhaps have called it professionally, the underplot—began about this period of our history to thicken. While all these most unworthy manœuvres were in progress, she—she, the *primum mobile* of all the family mischief, herself began to be puzzled. The influence of Lady Gramm over the colonel, which she saw was growing daily, worried and confounded her—*that* was something to be counteracted, something to overcome if possible. The game she had been so long playing, was quite discomfited by this new interference; all

her designs with regard to Jane, as tending to her great object, seemed to be frustrated, and she herself left in a most deplorable position.

Can anybody doubt that such a woman so placed, so excited, so mortified, and so determined, would not quietly sit down under her disappointment? No; rely upon it that all the dirtiest tricks of her dirty trade, and all the malignant bitternesses of her fiendlike disposition, would be called into play, to frustrate the ends and objects of everybody who might even unconsciously be counteracting her proceedings, and thwarting her plans.

It was not because Colonel Bruff had returned irritable and angry from Amersham's —however much she regretted the failure of that scheme—that she doubted of her power to bring him back to gentleness and kindness, and all the other amiable attributes by which his else martial character was distinguished—she was sure she could manage

that. But Jane was away—away from her influence, or rather from the persuasion which she had latterly found so well succeed with her. Harris she feared to trust—and both George and Frank Grindle were utterly beyond her reach. Yet she could not rest—the desire to be meddling—to be doing something—to undo what, much to her disappointment, seemed to be going on, was uncontrollable—always observing that the present and immediate object of her detestation was my Lady Gramm, whom she began to consider in the light of *a rival!*

Had the scene of the drama been laid at the colonel's house, the active little wasp-like body would undoubtedly have contrived by some means to alarm Lady Gramm's pride or delicacy, or infused into the inspired brain of her shadow Miss Pheezle, some kind of doubt as to the wisdom or propriety of her dear friend's marrying the colonel. The heroine of Bullock's-smithy had more than

once played Betty Hint in Macklin's "Man of the World," and she was quite prepared to act it in real life, had she means and opportunity. But there was the difficulty; the little *réunions* were at Lady Gramm's, to whose house she of course could not gain access. She felt sure that she should fail in persuading the colonel to remove the *venue*, as the lawyers have it, and try the cause in his own house, by giving one or two little parties there. Why should he do any such thing? Here were *her* drawing-rooms, *her* boudoir, *her* pastilles, *her* toady's singing, playing, and buffooning, *her* Roman punch, *her* powdered footmen, and blue-coated, white-waistcoated waiters, butler No. 1 and No. 2, with green-grocers and shoemakers to match. Supper—sociable sit-down supper—the soup good, all the accessories as they ought to be, and the champagne—a very questionable point in a widow's house—excellent.

Why then, with all this going on, should

the gallant and distinguished rhinoceros be induced to unsettle himself? A lady like Lady Gramm collects round her a circle of beauty, and wit, and talent, and accomplishment; and although the season was now over, and there was really nobody in town, her gay little rooms were somehow crowded with somebodies who made the evenings—ay, even until the mornings—particularly gay and pleasant.

So much for the colonel: but what for the widow? She was a well-looking person, and although a little flourishing in her way, after the manner of Lady Cramly, and a vast many other ladies of the same class, quite agreeable enough to induce a gentleman of the colonel's standing, just on the point of losing the head of his establishment, to look at and after her. But "ogni medaglio ha il suo reverso." What upon earth could induce Lady Gramm to encourage the hopes of the colonel? She certainly did not want a pro-

tector; she could take care of herself; and as for a husband—why, with all deference to her taste, when she might, with *her* fortune, have chosen any husband she pleased from amongst the young and thoughtless, who seem ready at a moment's warning to "obtain a settlement," should she have selected Bruff? So, however, it seemed to be—and so people talked, and so Smylar heard,—and that was enough.

Amongst the weapons used by such people as Mrs. Smylar, the upas-tipped arrow of the literary assassin was not wanting; the stiletto of the Italian graced her armoury in the shape of anonymous letters, which she could forge and polish, and point and poison, according to will; and upon the manufacture of this deadly weapon she determined, unless the behemoth came quietly under her subjection.

"Try fair means first," said the harpy, "but then let them look out."

Amongst others of her friends, Mrs. Smylar

entertained occasionally a certain Mr. Scratchley, who was—as the phrase goes—employed *on* a popular morning newspaper. He had known her for several years, and used occasionally to call, and be sociable with her when the colonel was out, after she came into, or rather *on*, the behemoth's establishment. Upon Mr. Scratchley, who, barring the tint of his linen towards the end of the week, was an exceedingly nice man, and wore a ring and studs—without which no person of any pretension in society *can* now show himself—she thought she could rely for a few paragraphs of "we understand" and "we believe" kind, which might do her cause good. She therefore wrote—and she wrote well and in a pretty hand—begging to see him, if he were disengaged, on one of the evenings when she knew, to her cost, Bruff would be occupied elsewhere.

Mr. Scratchley's answer to Mrs. Smylar was, that he was engaged all the week. *He*

knew her, had known her, and was quite sure something ill was "in the wind," when he got her note; besides which, having been promised something—which he never got—for ratting, he felt he should damage his coming dignity by enjoying himself as before in the housekeeper's-room of a house in Harley-street.

There is a story on record, which is sufficiently old to have been forgotten, which might be noticed here, as touching Mrs. Smylar's little literary attempt upon Scratchley. Mrs. Robinson—*the* Mrs. Robinson—the Perdita—at one time the everything—had written amongst other extremely pretty poems, one under the title of "*Sappho and Phaon.*" Anxious, as all literary ladies are to have the charming effusions of their pens put in some sort advantageously before the world, Mrs. Robinson wrote a confidential note to Mr. Boaden, who was then editor of some leading newspaper, in which she said,

"Dear Sir,

"Do let me have a few puffs for Sappho and Phaon. Yours,

"M. R."

This note she despatched to the office in the Strand by one of her servants.

Now it so happened that at that period there lived in the said Strand, a somewhat popular pastrycook of the name of Boaden, to whom—as servants will do universally—by mistake, or rather by reading his name over the shop-door, Mrs. Robinson's man took the note; to which she received this answer:

"J. Boaden's respects to Mrs. Robinson; having sent so late, all his puffs is gone; but he forwards a dozen gooseberry-tarts, which he hopes will do for the young ladies as well."

This sounds absurd, but is nevertheless very near if not quite the truth. Our friend Scratchley with the studs, however, fell far short of his predecessor, for he neither sent

Mrs. Smylar the puffs nor the gooseberry-tarts.

Smylar was vexed and irritated by the non-compliance of her gentleman of the press; for when a tawdry, trumpery thing like Smylar feels herself, as she fancies, neglected or slighted, there is nothing on earth equal to her rage and bitterness. *She* had made up her mind—*she* knew what she would do—she knew enough of Mr. Scratchley to ruin him, and although she had sweetly bidden him to supper the night before—ruin him she would.

Thus thwarted in the paragraph line, she resolved to put the anonymous-letter scheme in force, waiting, however, till she had practically ascertained in what degree her influence over the colonel had diminished. Upon what points or topics this hateful woman proposed in the madness of her suddenly excited rage to touch, we must wait to discover.

Now as regards the hasty voyage of Sir George Grindle to France, and his mean and

abject submission to his enriched son—we have much to say; but meanwhile what happens at home? The decencies of society have been satisfied by the seclusion of the baronet and his son during the period devoted to the obsequies of Mr. Leeson—that period is over—and Sir George is gone.

"Emma," said Amersham to his wife, "it seems to me quite out of the question, under all the circumstances, intimate as we are with the family, and Jane Bruff domesticated here, that we should not send an invitation to Mr. George Grindle to come and stay with us. Here we have under our roof his betrothed left in our charge. It seems that even she herself is not averse from his visit, and—"

"My dear Amersham," interrupted Emma, "why not wait till we hear from Miles Blackmore?"

"What upon earth, dear Emma," said Amersham, "have we to do with anything

more than the main question? It is true I have written to Miles, and Miles will write to me, and we may hear more, or we may hear less; but the plain simple fact is, that Jane is to be married to a particular man in a week or ten days—she is living under our roof; his father is gone to France; and he is alone at Brighton; now surely if we regard and esteem, as I am sure *I* do, this charming girl, under her circumstances, or rather under all the circumstances of the case, we ought to invite her intended husband here."

"Why?" said Mrs. Amersham doubtingly.

"Come, Emma," said her husband, "suppose it were your own case?"

"Why then," replied Emma, "I could give you a plain, clear, distinct, and straightforward answer—inasmuch as no power on earth would ever induce me to marry a man whom I did not love, and with whom I was not sure of being happy through life."

"Bravo, Emmy!" said Amersham. "I

really did not try for so flattering a speech. But our case, dear love, was different from this—here *is* something like compulsion on the side of old Bruff; but the question is, whether *we* should, by excluding the accepted man while we shelter the affianced woman, become partisans in the discussion. I should say no—and more especially because we really know nothing of the intended. You never saw him, or if you did—"

"No, no," said Emma; "but wait till we hear from Miles Blackmore."

"My dear child," said Amersham, "whatever we hear from Miles Blackmore can have nothing to do with the great question. Suppose, Emmy—now don't be cross—but suppose there *is* a Mrs. Grindle in Paris or at Versailles—not that we have more than Lady Cramly's version of it—but suppose there should be a lady so calling herself—why, don't you see?—these things will happen, and—and—"

"Yes," cried Emma, "so they will: and men are the most cruel, heartless, and—"

"Stay, stay, my Emmy," said Amersham; "the lady to complain of that is the lady herself. If there be one at Versailles, Jenny has nothing to do with it—ought never to have known of it, and never would have known of it, if it had not been for our dreadful diary-keeper."

"Amersham," said Emma, "you are as bad as the worst of them—I have no patience with you—in fact, I declare—"

"Luncheon is served," said a servant, opening the door most opportunely.

"Very well," said Amersham, affecting the most perfect calmness. Emma felt flushed at being, as it were, detected in her animation.

The man retired.

"I shall write to Mr. Grindle by this post, Emma," said Amersham, resuming the dialogue and reverting to his point. "I do not

see why he is to be excluded, nor do I see why we are to make ourselves partisans."

"Well, dear," said Emma, "may I ask Jane before you write?"

"You may, certainly," replied Amersham: "but, placed as we are, I do think and feel, that if it is unpleasant for her to meet Mr. George Grindle here, this is not a fit place for her residence; and, loving her as I do—as sincerely as if she were my sister—let her understand that, painful as it will be to me—to yourself she knows it will—I must, if she declines receiving under my roof the man to whom in ten days she is to be married, I must—Emma, I am bound in honour and duty, as a gentleman, to do so—restore her to the care and protection of her father."

"But you will *not* wait," said Emma.

"I have told you, my dear girl," answered he, "why I will not wait—I have nothing to do with any fact but the one—that our dear

girl is about to be married — that her intended husband is shut out from her society as long as she stays here and he is not a guest in my house—with all the other details we can have nothing to do."

"Well," said Emma, "come to luncheon —I suppose they are waiting; but do not write till I have spoken to her."

Nobody can doubt the rectitude of Amersham's views, or the justice of his proceedings, however soothed, moderated, and even counteracted, by the sensitiveness of his wife's feelings. The real truth was, that Mrs. Amersham, knowing nothing of Mr. George Grindle but by hearsay, was convinced that with Frank, Jane's happiness as a wife would be secure. But, as Amersham said to himself, and indeed to *her*, what was *that* to *them?* At one time Emma was satisfied that no man could make Jane happy as a wife but Miles Blackmore. *That* went off—and why should she now, without know-

ing any thing of his half-brother George, pronounce Frank Grindle the only man calculated to ensure her comfort through life? Amersham was right in exhibiting such firmness, and although Emma generally carried her point, this was decided against her, and that even with Jane's partial concurrence; and a letter was accordingly despatched, inviting Mr. George Grindle to pay the Amershams a visit, and pass a few days until the return of Sir George from Paris.

A new difficulty arose hereabouts. Lady Cramly and her dear Seraphine were to take leave the next morning after breakfast; and then what would be the state of the establishment? One pair of lovers is a dreadful contingency in a country-house. Two or three indifferent people stroll about, and leave the fond couple accidentally to themselves; but in *this* case there would be nobody but the nymph and swain, and the master and mistress of the house. Emma

thought of pressing—a performance generally very successful with her ladyship—Lady Cramly and her daughter to stay a little longer; but the horrid certainty that she would come out with the whole history of the pretty Mrs. Grindle at Versailles, rendered *that* a matter of impossibility; and so she resolved upon gathering in some of the neighbours as reliefs; the clergyman's two accomplished and charming daughters, and the village physician, not to speak of some stray man or two whom Amersham might get down from town, who, from caring for neither smoke, smell, noise, whirl, rattle, or

> "All the perils that environ
> The man that meddles with cold iron,"

would unquestionably adopt the use of the railroad, which reduces—most satisfactorily to the feelings of a suburban resident like Amersham—the distance, calculating by

time, of his house, from twenty miles in the country, to four from the metropolis; thus, under the influence of modern improvements, putting him happily and gloriously exactly in the position of a pipe-smoking cockney by the roadside at Clapham Common or Peckham Rye. These, however, are the blessings derivable from new institutions, and to which, above all, Mrs. Amersham was to be indebted for a supply of dandies for her next day's dinner, if she happened to want them.

It was now time for Jane to consider, deeply and seriously, the position in which she was placed. She had consented (how *could* she refuse?) to the invitation of George Grindle to the Amershams'—he was coming there under her sanction. She was, as far as both fathers felt, and as far as certain awkward-looking papers and signatures went, his wife—and—she hated him! A few days would only elapse before she was to be united to him for the rest of her existence—

to love, honour, and obey him—to perform a thousand duties of tenderness which she felt he never could excite, and affection which she was certain she never could feel. Yet the curse of a father, with which she was threatened, weighed heavily in the opposite scale to that in which were poised her earthly hopes and affections; she felt that matters had gone too far; she felt even that she could not trust her dear, her affectionate Emma upon this subject; she was ashamed, as it were, of her own weakness, and turned with something like anxiety to—what will the reader think?—the advice of Mrs. Smylar!

Yes, such is the influence of practical active vice over pure and genuine minds; such, too, the smirking plausibility of this particular woman, varied with an affectation of sensibility and tenderness of disposition, well *plated* with mock affection for her present victim, that Smylar, the stroller, had actually

superseded Emma in Jane's estimation as a counsellor.

She recollected—as how could she forget? —the readiness and anxiety which Smylar had expressed to rescue her from the match; she recollected—for they still rang in her ears — Smylar's words when she said, "Trust to *me* when the time comes;" the time *had* come, or very nearly so, and Smylar was not near her. To write to her was what Jane could not undertake; she knew that she and Harris were in the habit of correspondence, and did not know that she herself was surrounded by spies, all intriguing and playing their own games against her; but here, brooding over Smylar's suggestion of flying from her father's house, even on the eve of the wedding, sat poor Jenny, in the only house to which she could in such an emergency fly, having (as Emma, satisfied of the propriety of her husband's views upon the subject, had told her she must do) per-

mitted the visit of her betrothed on the morrow.

The morrow came, and with it the packing of Lady Cramly's carriage, which was that in which she went her tours, and was furnished with all sorts of drags, chains, pans, hammers, and tongs, as if it were to be started at that moment for Switzerland. The innumerable bags, boxes, sketch-books, camera-lucidas, telescopes, little chairs, umbrellas, female Macintoshes, snow-boots, writing-desks, and other such matters, required much time and skill in stowing away; but her ladyship never travelled without them—something *might* happen—her whole object was obtaining information herself and imparting it to others; it might snow in June in England, for it has before; and the Derby of 1840 was run in a snow-storm—therefore her boots: she might see something that struck her in her drive—hence her camera-lucida.

"I know I am very odd," said she, as she was taking her leave, "and very fussy; but then you see that's *my* way, as poor dear Prince Roustemout used to say in his beautiful broken English, 'My lady, your ladyship is like Noah, you carry all de vorld in your ark.' Poor dear man!—Seraphine has a great deal to answer for about him—he might have been alive now, only she is so insensible, and has no ambition."

"My dear Ma," said Seraphine, "the poor dear old man died of gout in his stomach!"

"Ah, my love," said her ladyship, "they told *you* so; that was considerate—it was heart, not stomach; however, never mind, the dearest friends must part, and so, my sweet Mrs. Amersham, we have only to say adieu, and to thank you for two or three most delightful days. I shall tell the bishop what a charming place you have got here. By the way, do you think your fair friend would like the bishop to perform the cere-

mony?—because if she would, I have only to say, dear Kit—his name is Christopher, but I always call his lordship Kit—will you do so and so? and he'll do it in an instant."

"Why," said Mrs. Amersham, "I am not sure that she would like to be spoken to on the subject—everybody has his fancy, and she has hers; and although it *is* to be—"

"Ah! ah!" said Lady Cramly, "I see—I see what you mean—exactly what the Empress once told me in confidence about one of her cousins—a *mariage de convenance*; but—ah, well, then of course don't say a word about it; only I know dear Kit would have been too happy—his lordship is such a duck of a prelate."

"Now, Ma," said Seraphine, who, although she had been talking to Jane, had overheard all the points of her mother's speech, "the carriage is all ready."

"But I am never ready to leave such a kind host and hostess," said Lady Cramly;

and then, in order to be particularly civil to poor Jenny, who almost cowered at her approach, she walked up to her with a face radiant in smiles, and taking her by the hand, said,—

"Good bye, dear Miss Bruff; I wish you all the happiness and comfort, and everything you can possibly desire in the world. I hope we shall often have the pleasure of seeing you in town; Seraphine will be delighted; and while we are in London, we can give you some capital music, and some very nice people. Good bye, dear."

Saying which, she took a most affectionate farewell of the unhappy girl, and then cuddling herself up in a shawl mightily resembling a blanket, she considered it necessary to salute Mrs. Amersham on the cheek, having done which, she slipped her arm through that of Amersham, who conducted her to the carriage, into which he handed her—an operation not so difficult to effect as

might be supposed, considering her ladyship's size and gravity, for the moment she put her foot on the steps, the carriage, as if conscious of her empire, bent over her so as to receive her with little or no difficulty.

"I hope," said her ladyship, as she threw herself backwards in the "ark," "I hope you like my rug—worked for me by the young Countess Flapsky. It's quite a love, isn't it?"

"Beautiful!" said Amersham, which he had scarcely time to say, before Seraphine vaulted into the vehicle with an elasticity which greatly startled the nerves of her courtly dame. However, she was full of sensibility and consciousness of her mother's absurdities, which kept her in a state of constant excitement during the whole period of the parental exhibition, and the happiest moment of her life was when—at least for the day—the curtain had fallen on the performance.

Well, away *they* went, and of course formed the subject of conversation after their depar-

ture. It might seem like a breach of confidence to disclose the particulars of what passed in detail; but as far as the general feeling went, it seemed to be one of something not very unlike satisfaction that her ladyship had taken her departure.

The next step which Jane proceeded to take, was to write to her father, informing him of the projected visit and expected arrival of George Grindle. This she knew would please and soothe him. She felt, moreover, confident that the intelligence would unquestionably reach Smylar; and although she could not satisfy herself as to the probability of any benefit arising to her from that circumstance, still if Smylar as well remembered what *she* had said on the subject of the marriage as Jane did, it would at least give her information of the progress of the affair. But as Jane was now temporizing, it might be almost called trifling, she was apprehensive that Smylar might suppose that she had really

become reconciled to the match, and so withhold her exertions to frustrate it: but that mattered little, inasmuch as Jane would be in town for at least a week before the ceremony, and then would come the opportunity for opening her heart—to her bitterest enemy.

As for George, the arrival of Amersham's letter startled, yet, as matters were going on, pleased him. It was warm, friendly, and genuine, and of course could be answered but in one way. He accepted the invitation and would be with them the next day. To be sure, it might have come to him with less alloy, had not the same post brought him this:

"Versailles.

"Dearest George,

"Our poor dear Tiney is very, very, ill. The French doctors think it an attack of scarlatina. Mr. Havard hopes better. The poor child is

dreadfully feverish, and occasionally delirious. He calls for papa sometimes for half an hour together, and when papa does not come, bursts into violent floods of tears. Can you, my dearest love, contrive to come over—even for one or two days? Much as I desire to see you, and be happy again in your dear society, it is not selfishness that prompts this letter. I would not on my own account, either bring you from scenes and pursuits which I know you delight in, or endanger the tranquillity which I hope and trust you are now enjoying with Sir George; but for our poor dear child's sake, I do implore you, if you possibly can, come and see him, and come soon, or perhaps, dear George, the poor boy may never see *you* again. Don't write, dear love, but come.

"Yours always unalterably,

"ELLEN."

"There's a pretty go!" said George, tossing the letter down upon the table. "I *can't* go,

and if I could, what good could I do?—catch the scarlet fever perhaps. I should be sorry if Tiney was to trot, because Nelly is so fond of him—and yet what have I to do with Nelly? I'll send her over some stumpy—fee the doctors—keep her mind easy, and all that —but—"

And here he took up Amersham's letter, and re-read *that;* and *then,* to do him as much justice as he deserves, he *did* feel, and bitterly too, about poor Nelly and her child—*her* child —HIS child. But of what avail now were these compunctious visitings? It was all too late, even if the transient gleam of natural affection which warmed his heart for a moment, could have been, as it were, daguerrotyped there; but alas! five minutes dissipated it, and the old consolatory, "Well, I can't help it; it's all no use talking now," came to his aid, and he decided the business by writing the three following letters:

" Brighton.

" My dear Jane,

" I have just received your uncommon nice little note, which came in neck and neck, as it were, with your friend Mr. Amersham's exceedingly kind letter. My talent for writing is not remarkable, as you know; so as I have accepted his invitation for to-morrow, and we shall meet so soon, I need only say how sincerely and truly I am, my dear Jane,

" Yours,

" GEORGE GRINDLE.

" I have not heard from the governor since his arrival on the other side of the water—suppose I shall to-morrow before I start in the morning, as he is uncommon particular in that line."

This was number one. Now for number two.

" Brighton.

" Dear Sir,

" I feel exceedingly obliged by your kind attention, and shall very gladly accept your invitation to-morrow. I have often heard Jane speak with great affection of Mrs. Amersham and yourself; and Colonel Bruff I know has the highest esteem for you both.

" My uncle Leeson's slip-out was particular awkward just at the minute, inasmuch as it has upset all the preparations which had been nearly finished, and cast me and the governor into the shade, just as we were coming out shiningly. I don't think you know *my* governor—he is a right good one, and will go any pace; and I am about to take a great liberty with you upon so short an acquaintance, and that only by letter—I mean, that if he should come back in a day or two from France, I should feel obliged if you would let me leave word as to where I am to be at peck and perch, so that if you have room for him,

he might join our little family party, which I consider it, under your hospitable roof. However, as I shall hope to be with you before the next post, perhaps it will be better for me to make my petition in this case in person.

"As I have not the honour of Mrs. Amersham's acquaintance, I must not beg you to present my best compliments to her, but I hope by this time to-morrow to tell her how much I am her humble servant, and begging you to accept my best thanks, to believe me,

"Dear Sir,

"Yours truly,

"GEORGE GRINDLE."

There is something, as we know, in the trine number which is strange, curious, ominous. It is useless here to enter into a discussion of the various attributes, consi-

derations, combinations, and concatenations therewith connected—let the facts speak for themselves—let letter *number three* be read.

" Brighton.

" Dearest Nelly,

" Your melancholy note followed me here. I am deucedly sorry about poor Tiney—it shows uncommon kind his crying after *me*, and there is nothing in the world I wouldn't do to get over; but the governor, although in a better humour, is still as sly as a fox; his notion of our parting, you know, was, that we really meant to part altogether, so that I am obliged to mind my P's and Q's, as they say; as for getting away at present, it is out of the question.

" The poor pup must have been taken very suddenly. Don't forget yourself—tell your Ma to cherish you, and have good advice. I don't half relish the French doctors—stick to

Havard. I inclose you an order on La Fleur for five-and-twenty pounds, and I hope that will be enough to make Tiney well. I hope, moreover, that he has not lost his stick, eh?—Fox.

"Write to me, and direct to Crocky's as usual—the letter will be sure to find me. Send me word that the boy is well, and that will do; and when some of the pheasants are dead, we shall meet.

"Adieu, my Nelly. Kiss the pup from me, if it won't endanger yourself. Remember me to your Ma, and believe me, dear girl,

"Yours always,

"G. G."

There are certain events occurring daily, which require no comment—and surely, after a perusal of these letters, a word of observation would be superfluous. Suffice it to

say, they were folded, sealed, directed, and despatched; and horses were ordered for Mr. George Grindle's carriage by twelve the next noon to take him to the Amershams'.



CHAPTER XIX.

It was clear that at this period of our history, as Mrs. Smylar would have quoted it, the time had arrived for the

> "Trouble, trouble,
> Fire burn, and cauldron bubble."

As far as matters had already gone, she had been defeated,—or if not actually defeated, baffled in efforts the success of which, knowing with whom she had to play her game, she never doubted. But here, by a singular sort of fatality, the doltish colonel, over whom she certainly had an influence of one

sort, and his innocent and unsuspecting daughter, whom by other means she had gotten into her clutches, were both removed from her power. The subordinates she doubted; and, in short, never had monarch fallen from a throne in a shorter time than Smylar had been toppled from the pinnacle —as she not unjustly calculated it—to which she had exalted herself in the establishment of Colonel Bruff.

If Mr. Leeson had not died, the marriage would have gone on—Jane would have remained within the sphere of her power—and then, as we know (for we have already heard the *programme* of the performance from her own lips), she thought, or rather was certain, that she had the tact to induce Jane to fly from her father's house rather than submit to the marriage. Now, by the delay, not only was Jane taken away from the effect of her manœuvrings, but was actually at the only house to which Smylar knew she could induce

her to fly for refuge from the misery she dreaded; and not only there, but there associated with this very intended husband.

Upon one point—luckily, perhaps, for all parties—Mrs. Smylar was even up to this moment uninformed—the yearning desire which *we* know Jane Bruff to have felt for her advice and suggestion at the important crisis which was fast approaching. The dignified disinclination on Jane's part from writing to Smylar, stopped the means of communication that way: and things had arrived at such a point, that if even Miss Harris had fancied that her young lady did feel any anxiety for such counsel, the jealousy which had unquestionably sprung up between those worthies, and Miss Harris's anxiety to remain with Jane after her marriage (and probably after her own with Mr. Rumfit), closed *that* channel; and Smylar, doubtful now of her ability to manage either Jane or her father, determined to proceed, in the first instance, by

endeavouring to destroy the acquaintance—to call it by no softer name—which was too evidently existing between the great colonel and Lady Gramm. Finding herself neglected by her friend Scratchley—which she at something like fifty-three thought, under all the circumstances of their former acquaintance, ungrateful—she determined to take this matter in hand personally herself, and endeavour, by dint of her anonymous letters, to separate them, making also a great and suitable effort, if possible, to implicate Miss Pheezle as the writer of the attacks; for which, as she would inevitably be turned out of the house whenever Colonel Bruff turned into it, she thought, with her dramatic head, might be worked up very naturally; and having revolved the matter in her mind, she sat herself down to work to make up a very pretty quarrel between the colonel and my lady.

But there *was* a difficulty in the arrange-

ment of the plot—a difficulty which perhaps does not at the first glance strike the reader. What upon earth could she make them quarrel about? Jealousy, which is a wonderful ingredient in such an affair, seemed wholly out of the question. The little flightinesses of youth had flown away—not even Lady Gramm could be made to believe that Colonel Bruff had fallen in love with Miss Pheezle; nor did Smylar confidently hope to excite any very powerful sensation in Bruff's great heart by insinuating that somebody else had fallen in love with Lady Gramm. No; the tone to be taken would be that of cautioning Lady Gramm against surrendering her independence to the colonel, at a moment when the approaching marriage of his daughter would naturally require an expenditure and settlement, and up to which period he had never exhibited any symptoms of a matrimonial character or disposition.

There can be no doubt, if Smylar could

have succeeded as she expected to do, in inducing Jane to elope from her home before the marriage, that old Bruff, with his violent and vindictive temper, never would have permitted her to re-enter it; and then the ball would have been at her foot, and the game in her hands. But having as she believed—although in point of fact she had not—been baffled upon this tack, she considered the other the best to try; and so let us leave her, while she goes to work in her den, to practise all sorts of disguises of hands, get proper paper, and make up bread-seals, which might, if well contrived, cast an imputation upon some innocent person, or, at all events, give her time for further consideration—let us leave her, we say, to her elaborated iniquities, merely wondering how far such business is permitted to succeed in this world of ours, and speculating whether we shall ever see her the wife of Colonel Bruff,

and the mother-in-law of the future Lady Grindle.

It was on the day preceding Smylar's determination upon the anonymous attack, that George—*the* George—the superlative George, proceeded to, and arrived at, the Amershams'. Never was greater trouble bestowed in turning out a dandy to the best advantage than on that morning. Everything he wore was plain and simple, but, taking the word in all its acceptations, "exquisite." His efforts had certainly succeeded, for he made a sensation when he was presented to Mrs. Amersham, far and away beyond that which, according to his own diary, the immortal Pepys created in church the first day he wore his perriwig.

"Nov. 8th.—To church, where I found that my coming in a perriwig did not prove so strange as *I was afraid it would*—for I thought that all the church would presently have cast their eyes on me."

If so, and it promised to be unpleasant, why did the worthy Pepys wear the perriwig? —*certes*, whatever Mr. George Grindle wore, produced a very favourable effect upon Mrs. Amersham, who, as yet knowing nothing of his mind and manners, except by hearsay, gave him at first sight the precedence of his brother as to personal appearance.

A man of the world, like George Grindle, is not apt to be slow at comprehending the language of looks, even if they are carefully restrained and moderated. He knew at a glance that Mrs. Amersham thought well of his personal appearance, and endeavoured to express (which with his tact and facilities was not very difficult) that she had impressed him with the most favourable opinions of herself; in which, by the use of the "devotional" which he could so well assume, mingled the highest possible deference and respect.

The relative power of male personal and

mental attractions over female minds, has been so frequently the subject of extensive and important discussion, that it may scarcely be worth while to open the question here. The Duke of Buckingham says,

> "Plainness and truth gain more a generous heart,
> Than all the crooked subtleties of art."

But Buckingham was then speaking of female beauty, or rather the want of it, and speaking truly and justly; for mere regularity of features or countenance, however dazzling for the moment or the hour, have not the power to gain the affections.

> "A world of things must curiously be sought,
> A world of things must be together brought,
> To make up charms which have the pow'r to move
> Through a discerning eye—true love."

It was once remarked by a leading contemporary critic, that as a novelist proceeds in his literary career, if he be well and carefully

watched, it will be found that he advances the age of his hero, the lover and loveable hero of his work, in due proportion with his own progress through life, and that he depicts as youthful and ardent after twenty years' writing the sort of gentleman whom, when he first started as an author, he would have set down rather as an amiable parent of his heroine, than a devoted suitor.

So might we suppose that the authorities derivable from writers on the subject of the relative powers of personal beauty, and intellectual qualities, may be quoted from the works of that class of authors, who, as regarded their appearance, came under Foote's description of one of his farcical heroines—"Plain but genteel, like a Wedgewood teapot." But this is not the case; for the majority of those who have treated the subject, happen, according at least to the evidence of their "effigies" handed down to us, to have been exceedingly well-looking persons.

Probably it might have been from personal experience even these recorded their opinions and feelings. Certain it is, that on the first blush—not of Mr. George Grindle, for blushing was not his *foible*—but upon the first appearance of that worthy, Mrs. Amersham *was* prepossessed in his favour; and although still admitting her regard for his brother Frank, she began to think Jane somewhat "particular," if not capricious, in having, as the phrase goes, set herself so completely against him.

But all this was illusion. At first sight, and for a short time, the counterfeit coin may deceive the uninformed: let it get its fair proportion of "wear and tear," in a purse of genuine money, and the simple contact will soon destroy its superficial splendour. George was all that could be expected or even desired in society, for the first two or three hours of one's association with him; but as he became more familiarised with his

associates, and began to feel the advantage he had gained over them, the tone and style of his conversation changed; and guarded as he was by all the efforts of his conventional good-breeding, he too distinctly proved that, with a certain smattering of knowledge and smartness of manner, he was not calculated to attract, and still less to retain, a heart like that of Jane Bruff.

Yet there was, in point of fact, more *in* George Grindle than he would permit you to think. He affected a sort of childish manner of speaking, and talked, as we have already seen, in a phraseology peculiar to a certain, and certainly not the best, clique; and although there was a quaintness and oddity in its style, when adopted by a well-looking "gentleman," which was attractive at first, it grew tiresome by constant practice, as must and will do every thing in society which is not founded upon natural impulses, and expressed in a natural way.

Mr. Amersham did the honours with all the amenity of a well-bred host; but he, having perhaps had greater experience in the school of which Mr. George Grindle was a disciple, did by no means, even in the outset, participate in his wife's approbation of their newly-arrived visiter.

One thing struck both the master and mistress of the house; indeed it was too evident to escape the notice of the most cursory observer—the evident desire of both George and Jane not to be left to themselves —not to be indulged in any of those delightful *tête-à-têtes* for which real lovers long, and which Mrs. Amersham, when she proposed enlarging their party, was so anxious to secure to them. If any opportunity occurred, of which an ardent swain would not have lost a moment in availing himself, George lingered behind; if ever Jane found herself at such a distance from Emma as to render possible the approach of George alone,

she fled to her friend as if for protection. Jane's decided repugnance to the match, if not actually to the man, might easily account for the one—but for the other?—did ever any thing like feeling for the poor deserted Nelly strike through George's heart?

These are questions which we cannot pretend to answer; but thus much we can see—that a less ominous progress towards matrimony has rarely been exhibited to mortal eyes than this of Mr. George Grindle and Miss Jane Bruff; and yet the result seems inevitable.

It has been aptly remarked in a very clever review, that the author, or rather the narrator of the details which the reader is now perusing, takes frequent occasion in all the preceding histories which he has published, to work out his characters, or bring about his *dénouements*, at, or after dinner. Nothing can be more just or true than the axiom that no man knows himself. I was not conscious of this

peculiarity until it was thus pointed out to me by a stranger. The moment it was noticed I looked back at as many of my "narratives" as I could lay hold of at the time, and sure enough every important event occurs at "dinner" or "supper." I have before noticed this just conclusion, and I have defended it, as I must again, upon the plain and undeniable fact, that it is *at* and *after* dinner or supper (more especially when the supper comes late, after a ball) that all the pleasurable business of society is transacted, and that the bashful Englishman and the timid Englishwoman are never so much at their ease as when they are sitting round a table; and moreover, that the table in question, whether one eats and drinks or not, is, and must be, the *point de réunion* of every circle every day in the week, whether in London or in a country-house.

There seems to be no great objection (neither does my good-natured critic make

any) to such dinner or supper-table being the scene of action. But whether it be so or not, I cannot help it, for after trying to fix Mr. George Grindle somewhere at Amersham's, I found it impossible, until, in a true English spirit, I caught him sitting with Amersham "*after dinner*," when the ladies had retired, and their *tête-à-tête* was only broken in upon by one visiter, "a quiet, gentlemanlike man," who seldom spoke, but who happening to have a set of remarkably white teeth, smiled perpetually upon those who did. In willingness to dance with a dowdy if asked, and to pass the wine when told, this "quiet gentlemanlike man" was beyond price. He was one of Mrs. Amersham's tame men—was greatly patronized in the family by Miles Blackmore, and although he had been exceedingly intimate with Jane Bruff at other times, was so well trained as to know that he must not so much as look at her on that particular day.

The character of a "quiet, gentlemanlike

man," which in general society is equivalent to that of a remarkably stupid person, had been acquired by this Mr. Danbury, in consequence, not only of his practical obedience to all orders issued to him by ladies in the regulation of their parties and privileges, but by his implicit acquiescence in everything that was or could be said by anybody about anything, in any place or at any time. There was a gentle lassitude in his manner which indicated, that the trouble of opposing or contradicting any human being would annihilate him; and so he was an universal favourite wherever he went.

"Uncommon nice place you have got here," said George to Amersham. "I took the liberty of running my eye over the stables. Capitally done—boxes beautiful, and some pretty considerably nice nags in them."

"Two or three of them, I believe, belong to my friend Danbury," said Amersham.

"Two," said Danbury, without moving a

muscle or opening his teeth; "one, the grey, I bought at Tattersall's. Gave sixty guineas for him, and wouldn't take double the price. The chesnut I got of Miles Blackmore."

Now, what it was—whether Miles Blackmore *did* possess some superhuman influence, or whether he had either consciously or unconsciously contrived to attain a power over his associates which they appeared to admit—one cannot exactly say; but certain it is, that the tone and manner in which the gallant, gay Mr. Danbury mentioned the name of the man from whom he had purchased his chesnut horse, were such as to lead the hearer to infer, that however excellent might be the qualities of the grey which he had bought at Tattersall's, the simple fact that the chesnut had been Miles Blackmore's, was enough at once to stamp its superior value, without any further observation or remark.

Upon this special occasion the mention of the name of Miles Blackmore appeared to

cause more than the usual sensation. Danbury quoted him as an "authority;" but the instant the name passed his lips a sort of electric shock seemed simultaneously to shake Amersham and George Grindle. Amersham's eye glanced upon George, he being conscious that he had written to Miles Blackmore, to inquire into the real truth of the history of the lady at Versailles; and George Grindle's eyes glanced instantaneously upon Amersham, because he was conscious that Miles Blackmore knew a great deal more of the "state of the case" than he should like to have known where he then was. The effects of this double consciousness were not seen by Danbury, who followed up his remark upon Miles Blackmore by inquiring from Amersham whether he had heard from him lately?

It would be difficult to decide which of his companions was the more embarrassed by this very simple and natural question—Amersham, aware that he had written to him to

make the most delicate and important inquiries upon a most important and delicate subject—or George Grindle, wholly ignorant that any such step had been taken, still perfectly conscious that the gentleman in question knew enough to overthrow his plans as regarded Jane Bruff. So the result of the question was a sort of "dead lock," as Sheridan calls it. Amersham looked attentively at George Grindle—George Grindle fixed his eyes on Amersham; and the dandy Danbury, not exactly knowing what the real effect was which had been produced by the mention of his friend's name, looked altogether astounded.

"Capital fellow, Miles Blackmore," said Danbury; "as high principled a man as breathes, and the best judge of a horse I know."

"You can't praise him too highly," said Amersham; adding, as he addressed himself to George Grindle, "Do you happen to know our friend?"

Now this was a very puzzling question, and one which, under all the circumstances, was very difficult for Mr. George Grindle to answer. To admit that he did know him would, as he apprehended, be to lead the conversation to the details of how he met him, when he met him, and where he met him; therefore it appeared most prudent to George to deny any knowledge of him beyond believing that he had seen him "about."

"I wrote to him," said Amersham, "a day or two ago. In fact, I wanted him to come over to us, but he seems quite in love with Paris."

"Or with somebody in it," said Danbury.

George Grindle felt exceedingly uncomfortable. He was conscious of flushing up —he could hardly account for the sensation —but so it was.

"No," said Amersham, "my friend Miles does not strike me as particularly susceptible. His chief attraction in Paris is the Louvre.

His devotion to art is remarkable, and being an artist himself, I believe he employs a good deal of his time copying the old masters."

So did Nelly. It was there, and by those means, that she had acquired the proficiency, which in the warmth of her affection for George she had offered to turn to account for his sake when he spoke of his pecuniary difficulties. The rapid transit of the railroad brought Versailles close to Paris, and with her mother and poor Tincy for companions, she occupied her time and mind—which, poor dear girl, required occupation—by working at her easel in the gallery. It must not be denied, that whenever such circumstances, or the associations of other days, were incidentally brought to his mind, George was considerably affected; and perhaps, if he had known how intently Amersham's eyes were fixed upon his countenance during the conversation relative to France, he would have exhibited stronger signs of consciousness and

agitation than he did; for so completely was Miles Blackmore mixed up in his thoughts with Nelly, whom he knew he was betraying, and with Tiney, who perhaps was on his death-bed or dead, that with all the *nonchalance* for which he was eminently celebrated, he scarcely knew whether he was sitting at table, or whether he should be able to keep his seat many minutes longer; in fact he was not in the slightest degree prepared to find that his travelling acquaintance was, as he appeared to be, the *enfant de famille* at Amersham's, the very last house, under the circumstances, in which he could have wished to find him thus domesticated.

"Strange enough," said the dandy, "talking of the Louvre, nobody knows any thing about how it came to be; some fellow kept horses and hounds there, but that's a deuce of a long time ago. It's a capital lounge now."

And here, one word as to the Louvre,

which the Napoleonite French will persist in telling one was "built" by Bonaparte. Every body knows, except those who are instructed by these odd French gentlemen, that Louis XIV., having resolved to complete the palace, first employed his chief architect Levau; but Colbert took a prejudice against his plans, and invited all the architects of Paris to send in designs: they were accordingly sent in and exhibited, but only one of them satisfied the connoisseurs to whom they were submitted, and that was from the pencil of a physician, Claude Perrault. However, even that did not meet the expectations either of Colbert or his master; and the King himself wrote an autograph letter inviting Bernini to Paris, which letter was despatched on the 11th of April, 1665.

The offers that were made him, and the honours which were done him in his progress to Paris, are inconceivable. Servants

from the royal kitchen were sent forward to prepare his meals, and when he came near Paris, M. de Chambray, Lord of Chantelou, steward of the household, was despatched to receive him.

Bernini reached Paris about the end of May, 1665; his hotel was furnished with the "meubles de la Couronne," and the royal servants were appointed to wait upon him. Nevertheless his design for the façade of the Louvre was not admired. However, the King patronized the architect, and laid the first stone on the 17th of October, 1665. A gold medal by Warin, worth 2400 francs, was deposited in the stone, having on one side the head of the King, and on the reverse, the design of Bernini, with the words, "Majestati et æternitati imperii Gallici sacrum."

As the winter approached, Bernini solicited permission to return to Italy — the

King gave him 3000 louis-d'ors, and a pension of 12,000 livres for himself and 1200 for his son.

As soon as Bernini was gone, Perrault addressed a memorial to Colbert, stating his objections to Bernini's design, the result of which was the adoption by Colbert of Perrault's. As a piece of architecture, it is certainly unworthy of high commendation. Nothing but its vast size—its length being five hundred and twenty feet, gives it any great claim to noticé; but what does besides give it a claim to notice here, is the inscription which Bonaparte caused to be put upon it, and which inscription used to be held and insisted upon by the admirers of that great general as the proof that *he*—the said general —*built* the Louvre.

The fact is, that under the imperial tyranny, the tympanum of the pediment, which had not been before finished, was adorned with a bas-relief by Lemot. Upon a pedestal was a

bust of Bonaparte, on the right was the figure of Minerva, on the left, that of the Muse of History, who appeared to be writing on the pedestal these words, "*Napoléon le Grand a achevé le Louvre*;" which, as far as the fact goes, might be applied to every journeyman briçklayer who plasters on the last chimney-pot to a gentleman's house. This display of silly vanity, however, was got rid of in 1815, when the bust of Bonaparte gave way to that of Louis XIV.; and for the bit of empty brag in the way of inscription, were substituted the words "*Ludovico Magno.*"

These hasty details connected with the royal palace were given by Amersham, not half so much with the view of disabusing his friend's mind respecting the claims of Bonaparte to merits which he ought never to have been allowed, as in his anxiety to prevent a pause in the conversation, just at a point which he was conscious must be delicate and important if—and he could scarcely doubt it

—his visiter, George Grindle, really had some *liaison* in the French capital.

There can be no question that our hero himself was exceedingly relieved by the historical and chronological turn the conversation had taken; and he was still more pleased when the summons to the drawing-room came; for the very name of Miles Blackmore, considering all the circumstances, was "a word of fear," as Shakspere says, to the profligate, who was, as it were, running a race against time, to get rid of a victim who was sincerely devoted to him.

While this conversation was going on, much more was doing as regards the progress of our little history.

"It is useless," said Jane, "perfectly useless, my dear Emma, for me to endeavour to overcome my dislike to this man; it is not alone that I detest the principles which he professes, and feel disgusted at the tone and spirit of his conversation; but now do ask

yourself, does he appear to possess any one quality calculated to make the life of a woman to whom he is united, happy? Recollect, Emma, this union is for life."

"I admit," said Mrs. Amersham, "that the prepossession in his favour *does* wear off; but still—"

"Oh, my dear friend," interrupted Jane, "do not qualify—do not make allowances. You know how anxious I am implicitly to obey my father's wishes, and how I dread his malediction for my disobedience. But let what may happen, I cannot consent to be this man's wife."

"Well," said Mrs. Amersham, "there is one thing greatly in your favour in the progress of the affair: for to see you with him, no one could possibly fancy that you ever had the slightest intention of doing any such thing; so that you never can be charged with encouraging his attentions."

"What then?" said Jane. "With a mind

and feelings like his, he is either unconscious of the indifference, or, which is worse, resolved to act upon my father's expressed determination, without caring whether I like him or not. No, Emma, no; I cannot give up so. It is a dreadful struggle between duty and inclination; but if I had any doubt on the subject before, the experience of the last few hours would have settled the question."

"But then, my dear girl," said Mrs. Amersham, "what course do you mean to pursue? He is not only your accepted, but affianced lover, and is to marry you in a few days—the affair is complete, and it was under those circumstances we asked him here."

"Yes," interrupted Jane, "I am fully aware of the extraordinary position in which I am placed, but—"

"If," said Mrs. Amersham, "this unconquerable dislike had established itself, you really ought, my dear girl, to have made your

resistance to the marriage at an earlier stage. I know nothing to advise as it is—"

"I think," said Jane, "if I could get to town, I might, perhaps, see my way clearer."

Here came into her mind the counsel of Smylar—the real management of which she did not comprehend, but to which she clung with a hope of extrication from her difficulty.

"Who have you to confide in there, Jane?" said Mrs. Amersham, quite satisfied that if she committed herself to Smylar her doom was assuredly sealed.

"Who?" said Jane; "anything, Emma, is better than the prospect before me; surely even *you* would conspire—if it must be so called—to save me."

Now this was the first direct attack upon an application to Emma, and she felt proportionably flurried. Here Jane was confided to her care by her father—hither her intended husband had been invited—and

here her future father-in-law and his other son were expected.

"My dear girl," said Emma, "indeed you ought not to trifle with this matter. If you really and truly feel so strong a repugnance to the marriage, you ought to make up your mind to express it. You are not only acting unfairly by this Mr. Grindle, but by yourself: it is absolutely necessary that you should come to a determination and express it."

"But, dearest Emma," said Jane, "every arrangement is made, all the settlements are prepared, and if it had not been for the death of Mr. Leeson, I should before this have been his wife. My father would kill me if I now resisted, or, worse than killing me, would curse me. What *am* I to do—what *can* I do?"

"Now, Jane," said Mrs. Amersham, "before I take any steps in this matter—and what steps to take, I at this moment do not in the slightest degree understand—tell

me honestly and fairly, as you have always hitherto told me everything, is it that another attachment growing upon you has rendered your disinclination to this marriage stronger?"

Jane's answer was a flood of tears; she threw her arms round Emma's neck, and thus practically confirmed her belief that Frank Grindle had made himself master of her heart; and *he* was expected at the Amershams' on his return from France with his father.

This it was that seemed to have hastened the crisis of her fate—this, added perhaps to her conviction that the story told by Lady Cramly, relative to George Grindle, was true, and that her father's history of the affair was an evasion. She longed to get to town —she longed to talk to Smylar, who evidently knew all the particulars of the case; and so agitated was she after the dialogue with Emma, that when the men came to

the drawing-room she was missing. She had been forced to bed by a dreadful headache.

It had now become so evident to Mrs. Amersham that something desperate would infallibly arise out of the experiment of this marriage, that her anxiety for news from Miles Blackmore was most painfully increased. Not that she saw why, even if such a connexion had existed between George Grindle and any frail fair one, that should—being dissolved and put an end to—interfere with his union with Jane. Still she had that reliance upon Miles Blackmore's honour and firmness of purpose, that she thought if he once applied himself to the subject, they should know so much better how to act, always observing, as Amersham did, and endeavoured to impress upon his wife's mind, that they had nothing whatever in the world to do with the affair.

While all these things were going on

in England, and while Colonel Bruff was making himself a very considerable donkey at Lady Gramm's, Sir George Grindle had caught his son Frank at Paris—hit him like a good shot at Meurice's, and without in the slightest degree enlightening him as to the object of his paternal and unexpected visit, resolved never to leave him till he got him safe back in England—satisfied that a *dénouement* touching Nelly would upset the whole concern. To get him away from Paris was Sir George's first object, and to keep him constantly with him while he *was* there, the next: in pursuance of which scheme he trotted him about to see sights, and of course amongst others, the gallery of the Louvre.

In this gallery, as they passed through it, was a tall fine-looking man assiduously employed in copying a matchless picture by Teniers. Next to him was a delicate creature, with whom he appeared to be acquainted,

also at work; at her side was a lady, who proved to be her mother, and at her feet was crouched a beautiful child, who, although close to his young mother's feet, seemed to be exceedingly fond of his mother's friend, the tall fine-looking man.

The tall fine-looking man had the day before received a letter from a friend in England, relative to circumstances connected with the handsome girl and her lovely boy who were near him. He proposed accompanying them that afternoon to Versailles, in order to obtain some information which his friend in England required: he knew a good deal of the history of these people already, but not enough to answer his present purpose.

As he was working upon his copy, Sir George Grindle and his second son Frank passed by—and passed by without noticing his fair neighbour. Trifling as this incident seems, it was a very important event in the

little history which he was studying. He said to the lady next him,

"Don't you know those people?"

"I never saw them before," said the lady, proceeding with her work.

This struck the questioner forcibly, and fully determined him on availing himself of his growing or rather grown acquaintance with them, to proceed, as it had before been his intention, to Versailles.

The reader of course needs not to be told that the fine-looking amateur was Mr. Miles Blackmore—that the ladies were Nelly and mother, Mrs. Eversfield, and the beautiful boy was our poor Tiney; it being the *last* day he was out before his illness.

The difficulty which Miles Blackmore felt in ascertaining the real state of the case as concerned George Grindle and Nelly may easily be conceived. In Paris—in Versailles—as Lady Cramly for once in her life had truly said, she was known only as Mrs.

Grindle. Miles Blackmore, who had, as we know, first accidentally and since casually seen and met them, had some doubts as to the regularity of the connexion before he received Amersham's letter; and those doubts were confirmed into certainties when he saw Sir George Grindle, whom he knew (as everybody in London did) by sight, pass his *soi-disant* daughter-in-law without recognising her, while she, *per contra* as the accountants say, denied any knowledge of him.

What could it all mean? so amiable a creature, so kind, so affectionate, and such an exemplary mother! having too a most exemplary mother herself—generally received, and universally respected in a most respectable circle. Miles Blackmore was not a man to be beaten in such a case as this; he soon made up his mind to ascertain all the facts, and less for the gratification of satisfying his friends the Amershams, than for the sake of doing justice, he resolved to set about such

an inquiry as should result satisfactorily to somebody—whom he cared not, so that the truth should be established, and the right maintained.

It was just five days after Sir George's visit to the Louvre, that he and Frank reached Amersham's. George's pressing invitation—very well gotten up—was of course to be immediately attended to; whereupon the baronet and his second son proceeded post-haste to join the family party, and arrived in the evening of the third day.

It may seem to some people that George Grindle, who, as one imagines, must have been aware of Jane's coldness towards him, exhibited a considerable want of generalship in bringing his brother in immediate contact with *her* and contrast with himself. But they who entertain this opinion have not yet acquired a competent knowledge of George Grindle's character; he feared no rival—he dreaded no comparison, and least of all with

his half-brother, whom he considered rather as a foil to the diamond than otherwise—at least in the society of women.

Sir George was quite charmed with the place, and very much pleased with the Amershams; but, in the course of the first evening of his lodgment there, the gentle, timid manner of Jane Bruff to Frank struck him particularly; and when they began to sing duets, and Mrs. Amersham accompanied them, and then Frank betook himself to a long black flute, all over silver flaps, and poured forth some exquisite music, he could scarcely refrain from giving a hint to George to try and drive away the intruder. But no—George was engaged in a corner with Danbury at *écarté*, — having, as has already been hinted, a facility of king-finding at the bottom of the pack, which had been remarked upon more than once in other places.

After the music, came a discussion about drawings; and when Frank, with the best judgment and without the slightest presumption, gave his opinions, his opinions were all seconded by Mrs. Amersham; and what was worse, when Jane, exceedingly pleased, not only by the intellectuality of his conversation, but by his manner, and the evidence of good taste and good feeling which pervaded all he said, cast her eyes towards her charming friend Emma, she saw in the reciprocated look an according *fiat* of approbation; and yet these very people were nourishing and cherishing in their house the other brother as the affianced husband of the girl, whose marriage was to take place in ten days or a fortnight!

However, they are settled for the present, and there they must remain, while we cast our eyes over the gallant and odious colonel, whose campaign against the heart of Lady

Gramm is causing much misery and irritation in the bosom of the oily-curled heroine of Bullock's-smithy.

It was not likely that whatever underhand machinations this plague in petticoats might be contriving, she would be for an hour without intelligence from the Amershams. The rational over-education of Miss Harris rendered her quite capable of forwarding despatches regularly, and the arrival of Mr. Frank Grindle there could not fail to afford subjects for their correspondence. But still Smylar was unarmed till she got Jane to town; that was her object — that was her game; and, as we have already seen, Jane had fallen, or very nearly fallen, into her snare. It was upon this great scheme of Smylar's that all depended. What was to save the poor girl we yet do not know; the trap was set and baited, and the recent defection of the colonel from the rouge and

ringlets made the case considerably more desperate.

Taking these circumstances in conjunction with the unsettlement of Jane's mind—supposing it ever to have been settled—produced by the appearance of Frank in the domestic circle at Amersham's, and which, as nobody —except perhaps Mr. George Grindle himself, —could doubt, would produce results the most disadvantageous to the intended bridegroom, Smylar began to rejoice in the midst of her anger and jealousy at the prospect which presented itself. Judge then what must have been her exultation when, on the evening of the very day on which she received the intelligence of the location of the baronet and his younger son exactly where she wished them to be, she found the colonel, having dined at home, disinclined to leave his house, and desirous of some conversation with her after the manner of the olden time.

How the woman's ears tingled when Mr. Rumfit announced that the colonel wished to speak to her! how her bad heart beat as she hastened to the room in which he had been dining! Her plot had succeeded—her scheme for making a quarrel between him and Lady Gramm had turned out well—she felt assured of it, and as upon *that* depended all, she could scarcely control the motion of her limbs as she paced the passages to reach his presence.

"Smylar," said the colonel, as she entered the room, "sit down, Smylar. I wanted to talk to you about getting ready for Jane's wedding. Time goes on, and I suppose their grief for Mr. Leeson wears off; and I had a letter from Jane to-day, who writes in better spirits than usual; and so I was thinking about what we had best do in making arrangements here for the—what do the French call breakfast?"

"*Déjeûner*," said Smylar.

"That'll do," said the colonel; "that's it. I have forgotten my French, and my English too; almost."

"I thought, colonel," said Mrs. Smylar, "that you intended Lady Gramm to be the—"

"There, that'll do," interrupted the colonel; "I know nothing of Lady Gramm. She is a conceited old doll; and her friend Miss Pheezle and her infernal verses are as bad. No, no, we can do without Lady Gramm; you can manage all—everything."

"But," said Smylar, with a face into which the most beautiful expression of ingenuousness was thrown, "have you and her ladyship quarrelled, colonel?"

"That affair is settled," said the colonel. "Some good-natured friend of her's and mine —most probably that Miss Pheezle herself— wrote to her to tell her that I wanted her jointure to make up for what I was to give Jane; and so she flew into a rage, and asked

me whether I supposed she ever would marry me, even if I asked her; and so in short our acquaintance is at an end."

"Somebody wrote?" said Smylar, innocently. "What, was it an anonymous letter, colonel?"

"Yes," said the colonel. "Infernally anonymous. Nothing could be worse, as she represented it. But there's an end. It was the woman's own fault. She was always throwing out hints about the loneliness of widows, and all that, and Miss Pheezle used to write poetry about it. However, that'll do —only don't let me hear the woman's name again—that's all."

"Well," said Smylar, "it only shows how very strangely things turn out in this world. From the moment I first saw Lady Gramm I made up my mind that she would come to be mistress of this house, and thought what a comfort it would be to you when Miss Jane was gone, to have such a companion."

"Ah," said Bruff, filling his fair friend a bumper of claret, "I want no companion like my Lady Gramm. I shall cut down my establishment, and, as I told you before, take a smaller house and live snug, and—eh, Smylar?—here's your health, old woman. Yes, you know all my ways; my little oddities, what I call my crinkums and my crankums; you can manage for *me*."

"Why, colonel," said Smylar, "as far as I am able I shall always be too happy to do what I can to keep things straight and comfortable; but then Lady Gramm would have taken charge of the establishment in so different a manner."

"May be so," said the colonel; "who knows? What! Here, draw your chair this way—have another glass of wine. The divil take Lady Gramm—there's nothing like habit—nothing like old friends."

Saying which, the gallant colonel exhibited strong symptoms of being exceedingly

affectionate to Mrs. Smylar, which, as being unquestionably conducive to the completion of her great plan, was to that ingenuous lady most particularly acceptable.

"And what," said Smylar, withdrawing herself gracefully from the immediate proximity of the gallant soldier, "what does dear Jane say in her letter to-day? I suppose Mr. George Grindle is there?"

"Yes," said the colonel, somewhat puzzled as to what to add, inasmuch as although Smylar's information respecting Frank's domestication in the house had been premature, the fact was now established. "Yes, Sir George is there, and some other people."

"And Mr. Frank?" said Smylar, inquiringly.

"Why," said the colonel, "I believe yes—a snug family party."

"Of which you ought to be one," said Smylar. "Now, colonel, don't you blame *me*

if things turn out wrong in this house. I have given you warning."

"Yes," said Bruff, "and sent me down on a wild-goose chase for no purpose."

"I don't know," answered Mrs. Smylar, "whom you may call a wild-goose; but take my suggestion at the worst, I was only wrong in point of time. The amiable and all-accomplished Mr. Francis Grindle, you say, is *now* staying in the same house with Jane."

"Well, and what then?" cried Bruff in a tone of impatience; "Jane is engaged to be married; where is the danger, or impropriety, or anything else, in her associating with her future brother-in-law. No more as I see than with her future father-in-law. Set your wits to work in making preparations for the—the what is it?—the *déjeûner* —and leave me to settle all the rest. Rely upon it, Smylar, I know what I am about, and if I didn't, Sir George Grindle does."

Had there been a third person present at

the scene which has just been described, he might have seen the expression which animated Mrs. Smylar's countenance, when the colonel expressed his opinion of his own intellectual qualities. As far as matters were at this juncture proceeding, her triumph was complete. Every thing seemed to work exactly as she wished; and when she went to order the colonel's coffee, she was as well satisfied with herself as ever she was in her life.

On the day following this conversation Amersham received a letter from Miles Blackmoré, in answer to his "delicate question," and it was just such an answer as anybody who had the pleasure of Mr. Miles Blackmore's acquaintance, might have expected. It contained nothing whatever relating to the subject under discussion. It was short, abrupt, and written, as Amersham thought, under strong excitement. The main point — indeed the only important

point which it contained—was the intelligence that Blackmore intended to be in England in a few days, till which time he would postpone the announcement of whatever intelligence he might be able to procure. Not a name or a fact was to be found in the letter; so that when Emma communicated to Jane the reply which her husband had received, her heart sank within her, doomed as she was to an uncertainty with regard to the vices of the man to whom she was destined to be married.

Time however flies, and matters are drawing to a conclusion. George Grindle, rather *ennuyé* by the "domestic comforts" of Amersham's circle, found it absolutely necessary to run up to town for a couple of days; which he accordingly did, leaving Jane to the unmitigated enjoyment of the society of Frank,—who, feeling the embarrassment of the position in which he was placed, devoted himself to Mrs. Amersham, whose

look and manner indicated not only her estimation of his qualities and accomplishments, but her just appreciation of the line of conduct he had adopted.

What Jane thought about it, we cannot pretend to say; but this is certain, that when George took his departure for town, and the wedding-day was positively fixed for that day fortnight, she hated him more than she ever had before.

CHAPTER XX.

THE preparations for the approaching marriage were now proceeding with all that *fussiness* which usually belongs to them, whatever may be the condition of the parties concerned.

A christening, a wedding, and a funeral, are events in which the principals, or their friends, deem it a paramount duty to use every exertion to impress the world, or as much of it as can in any way be brought within their influence, not of the value of such things generally, but of the immense importance of the particular one in which they happen to be interested. We are very

much afraid that the religious nature of either of these most sacred, and deeply interesting ceremonies, is scarcely ever considered: the paramount object, from the highest to the lowest, as far as their circumstances will allow, being to neglect nothing essential to give the affair an imposing appearance, and to call in every attainable assistance in making out their pretensions to as much consequence as they can assume. Of these grand epochs in the drama of human life, the second, for exceedingly good and efficient reasons, must always be the one selected by the chief actors for playing their peculiar *rôle* with appropriate effect—they not being in the first allowed even to walk on the scene, and in the last they are still less capable of such exertions, their part having been played out, and, as far as their performances are concerned, the curtain dropped.

Marriage, therefore, when there is no obstacle to prevent "the happy event"

coming off with proper *éclat*, is never allowed to pass without extraordinary exertions being made in the appropriate machinery, dresses, and decorations. The first lady and first gentleman are by universal consent, of which their own seldom fails to form a prominent part, placed in the position of *stars* in most instances "for that occasion only;" and the whole of the company by whom they are supported seem bound by no common influence to put forth all their energies, that the performance shall afford the utmost satisfaction to their audience, and, what is not often the least important point in their considerations, to themselves. Fashion, usually so despotic, is here tyrannical. The least of her usages are regarded as the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not, neither are they to be evaded in their very slightest particulars. It appears that no wedding can be pronounced respectable wherein the high contracting parties are not scrupulously

exact in observing the customary regulations. The dress, the cards, the cake, the favours, the invitations, the entertainment, and the flight into the Egypt of the honeymoon, receive infinitely more attention than the legal settlements, or the sacred ceremony. In many instances more time is devoted to a consideration of the bride's pocket-handkerchiefs than might have sufficed to instruct her in the nature of the serious responsibilities and obligations she is incurring; but then it should be remembered that fashion and morals are not judged to be of equal consequence in these matters, and knowing this, of course there can be nothing further to say.

It was far from the wish of the gallant and very disagreeable colonel that the marriage of his daughter should be shorn of the least of the beams which shone around the most brilliant affair of the kind that had been celebrated in the respectable portion of society to which she belonged. Indeed this might

be anticipated. Ambition, as we have convincingly shown, lay at the bottom of the obtuse intellect of the military behemoth, when entertaining the idea of uniting his fair and interesting Jane to the eldest son of Sir George Grindle, and scarcely took upon itself a less excusable shape, than the very similar inclination by which Sir Giles Overreach was influenced when endeavouring to dispose of *his* daughter. Whilst this lay at the bottom, a still less excusable desire found a place at the top, wherein the be-ringletted and spindle-shanked ex-heroine of Bullock's-smithy, ever since her successful experiment in the anonymous line, seemed the prominent object: of which exaltation she appeared daily becoming more secure. But of this more anon.

He now applied himself, with as much interest as he could take in such things, in superintending, after *his* fashion, the multifarious matters which may be classed under the head of preparations for a wedding on a grand scale. Perhaps at first he had not intended

to have taken so active a share in these arrangements, nor, it is equally probable, would he have tolerated the expenditure it must occasion; but he had, since his fruitless errand to the Amershams, felt more kindly disposed towards his excellent and affectionate daughter than he had ever been before, and he readily deceived himself in imagining that the display he was endeavouring to create in honour of the eventful day that gave poor Jane to the amiable ex-lieutenant of dragoons, was for the purpose of gratifying her rather than himself. To these novel duties he was also greatly instigated by the specious Smylar, who, besides discovering that in the liberal orders the several tradesmen received she might obtain very pretty pickings, saw that by encouraging the colonel in busying himself in making as much confusion as possible by his blundering interference, she should keep him from regretting the loss of Lady Gramm's society, and from feeling any inducement to

resume the dangerous intimacy she had so cleverly, as she considered, destroyed.

When Colonel Bruff was not at the Doldrum he was pretty sure to be inspecting and directing, wherever he could bring his heavy undignified person to a halt. By the former he did no very great harm, though he did about as little good; but as he seldom had any clear conception of what he himself intended, it is not to be supposed that the tradesmen honoured with his commands could obtain a more definite one; consequently there is nothing surprising in the fact that his services in this quarter materially delayed the execution of his orders. The most respectful attention was paid to him by the lawyer, coachmaker, silversmith, upholsterer, and their coadjutors; but as it frequently happened that the orders given on the second day were as opposite as possible to those given on the first, and that such as were added on the third day could not by any exercise of skill be made

to harmonise with those of the two preceding, the lawyer, coachmaker, silversmith, upholsterer and their coadjutors were exceedingly puzzled what to do. They at last made the very pleasant discovery that all they had done they had done wrong, which never failed to put their highly respectable but very doltish customer in a monstrous ill-humour at *their* blundering and stupidity. According to an old established truism, the longest lane has a turning; but the gallant and disagreeable colonel contrived to lead every one he attempted to direct through a long lane composed of nothing else but turnings. The poor man was always turning either to the right or left, or else was forced to the unsatisfactory course of retracing his steps. However, he ultimately did contrive to finish his task; but never before had so redundant a way of doing it been thought of.

Nevertheless, all this time Bruff was particularly well satisfied with his own proceed-

ings in relation to what was going forward under his auspices. He lamented the delay that had occurred, because he could not help regarding with some uneasiness the connexion his hopeful son-in-law in perspective had formed—of the knowledge of which he had made so unwarrantable a use in the communication he had made to his daughter at the Amershams'; therefore he was more anxious than ever for the accomplishment of his darling project. Of what might occur after the ceremony, he never gave himself a moment's concern. There was no room in his big heart for even the least particle of sympathy for the betrayed and deserted Ellen, whose only fault had been her devotion to the husband he was securing his unfortunate child; there was no consideration for the unhappy consequences which must arise out of such an ill-judged union, of a disposition such as Jane possessed, with a nature so deficient in honourable principle

and manly feeling, as that owned by the baronet's favourite son:—he had no cares, he had no thoughts, he had no feelings for anything that went beyond the legality of the marriage which, for reasons that seemed to him good, he had determined on. He had got a resolution fixed in his dull, foggy mind, that Jane Bruff should be Lady Grindle; and come what would, he was decided that Lady Grindle Jane Bruff should be.

His closetings with the manœuvring spider-brusher, who with so little credit to himself was gradually enclosing him in her toils, were becoming more numerous and confidential, and were increasing so in length as to excite the observation not only of the respectable Mr. Rumfit, but of all the servants in the house. Smylar had no friends in the establishment; the over-cunning and over-scheming rarely have anywhere; and although they all feared her, there was more than one amongst them who would gladly

seize upon any opportunity that might present itself for opening the eyes of "old Buzfuz" as to her true character. With this object they watched her more narrowly than she imagined. Indeed her attention was so engrossed by one important scheme, in which she entered heart and soul, under the delightful conviction that it was as feasible as it was attractive, that matters now of so little importance in her eyes as the thoughts and proceedings in the servants' hall, totally escaped her. Nothing could appear more triumphant to her than the effects produced on the vain, stupid, selfish feelings of the offended frequenter of Lady Gramm's *soirées* by her fiendish machinations, and often did she congratulate herself on the remarkable tact and talent she had shown in breaking off the connexion. The hints the colonel had given her of his intentions, and the desire he had expressed that she should *manage* for him, were remembered and cherished by her

as "confirmation strong" of the existence of that influence over her master's inclinations which she had so long and earnestly been studying to create.

It must not be imagined, that in the eager struggle in which she was now bending all the arts, powers, and capabilities she had acquired during the course of her governess-actress-housekeeper existence, "our Jane," as her master's daughter was now familiarly styled by her, was forgotten. Far from it. That amiable but most unhappy young lady was still a prominent object in her cunning, scheming, calculating, low mind, and in her depraved heart the wish to ruin her had as firm a place as ever. But finding the artful manœuvres she was continually having recourse to, to prejudice the father against his child, failed of producing any effect—that with a dogged obstinacy and dense stupidity, as she considered it, he often very impatiently "that'll-do'd" all the suspicious warnings,

doubts, fears, insinuations, and conjectures by which she sought to worry him into sending for her home, that her victim might be brought more securely within the influence of her artifices—she was politic enough to discontinue such useless efforts, and her object seemed to be as much as possible to humour the still somewhat too intractable despot to the top of his fooling, both as regarded the preparations for her young mistress's wedding, and in all those little gallantries the elderly behemoth thought proper to exhibit during their private consultations after dinner, which afforded such a fund of entertainment to the respectable Mr. Rumfit, and such of his colleagues as could be induced to undertake the dangerous achievement of peeping through the keyhole.

"Things are going on bravely, colonel," said the ringletted and rouged Machiavel in petticoats, after she had insinuated herself into her usual station in his immediate

neighbourhood, "*her* custom always of an afternoon" since she had been sent for by her master;—"and we may say with our immortal bard,

"'Thus far into the bowels of the land—'"

"That'll-do—that'll do!" exclaimed that brave and exceedingly discriminating officer, his heavy eyes brightening up at her approach, as much as anything so particularly dull could. "Sit down, old woman. Draw your chair this way; nearer—that's it. All snug at the doors, eh?"

"Quite so, colonel," replied the star of Bullock's-smithy, affecting as much regard to propriety as would not entirely discourage her occasionally disagreeably affectionate admirer, whilst it proved to him that in her behaviour she was the very model of discreet housekeepers. She however was in an error with regard to the doors; they were not quite so secure as she fancied.

"I'm getting those blockheads at last to understand what I want of them," observed old Bruff as he filled a bumper of claret for his companion. "Had I them under my command a reasonable time, I'd drill them into something more like obedience to orders. Military discipline has many resources to quicken a dull comprehension. Here's your health, old woman."

This was said with one of his favourite applications to the patella of the amiable object of his gallantry, which were invariably attended on her part with a graceful drawing back, and a slight expression of reserve, exceedingly proper, and particularly creditable to the *once*, at least, indiscreet ex-governess.

"Thank you, colonel," replied the odious menial, giving her lips the necessary bite to make them assume the freshness she had before found so attractive. "Yes; you military gentlemen do manage with an extraordinary celerity to bend the most stub-

born natures to your will. But where us poor women are concerned—" and here the pendant ringlets were agitated with a brief nodding of the head, that could only be compared, in the comprehensiveness of its expression, with the immortal shake of Lord Burleigh, whilst the look with which it was accompanied, as an Irishman would emphatically say, "bate Banagher."

"That'll do — that'll do!" cried Sandy Bruff, in no slight degree gratified by this well-directed piece of flattery. "Yes, we don't stick at trifles—eh, old woman? We know how to carry on the war. Nothing daunts us—nothing stops us. The men are glad to get out of our way, and the women can't help themselves."

"Exactly so, colonel," answered Smylar, after one or two "Don't colonel's"—"You're really *too* bad"—and similar expressions, with which she received the affectionate pinchings and pokings, and tender pressures on the

foot, which that gallant and distinguished officer appended to every sentence he uttered. But innocent familiarities which are frequently had recourse to by elderly gentlemen with a disposition to gallantry, were never likely to be severely checked by the accommodating and calculating Smylar, and at the present moment she was less inclined than usual to receive such attentions with even the affectation of decorousness she invariably maintained.

It could not be supposed that her seductive ringlets had been made so exceedingly redolent of "thine incomparable oil, Macassar," or that her exquisite complexion had been so carefully manufactured, or that she had put on the new, stylish, and youthful dress she had adopted to set off to the best advantage whatever attractiveness there might exist in her fading charms, without some more profitable object in view than was apparent in her ordinary half complying,

half resenting mode of receiving her doltish admirer's little sportive evidences of good humour and good will.

This was so far from being the case, that, as all particularly emphatic people say, it was "exactly the reverse." She, wriggled herself into the apartment with the express determination of exerting all her powers of fascination, and all the unscrupulous arts which are so readily employed by persons of her class, to make the grand move which was to put the intricate game she had so long been playing, completely into her own hands.

"You must let *me* propose a toast, now, colonel," observed Smylar, looking amazingly happy and sentimental as she raised her brimming glass towards her mouth, and then added, with the peculiarly audible and impressive intonation once familiar to her when doing a bit of the pathetic on the classic boards of Bullock's-smithy,

"Here's to the health and happiness of our dear Jane, and may her career in this sublunary world be as brilliant as that of her distinguished and excellent parent."

"I say ditto to that, as some fellow said somewhere," exclaimed old Bruff, tossing off a bumper with extreme satisfaction. "Good soul, Smylar — sha'n't forget you. When all's settled, and Jane's fairly married and disposed of out of my way, you shall manage every thing. You know all my little wants and wishes — you understand all my ways. Small house—every thing snug and comfortable—we'll do as we like and care for nobody—eh, old woman?"

"Depend upon it, colonel," observed the vivacious gentlewoman, with a shade of seriousness; "if my own wishes, my own feelings are to set in the direction most congenial to them, you shall have my best attentions, with that entire and disinterested devotion I have ever exercised towards you,

since I have had the honour of superintending your establishment."

"Eh, Smylar, what's that?" exclaimed the gallant officer with a puzzled look.

"Heaven knows," continued the Mrs. Colonel Bruff that was to be,—at least, as she had decided,—"that from the moment I entered this house, the welfare of yourself and that of your dear daughter have been the subject of my unceasing consideration, and that I have spared neither pains nor labour to secure her happiness and your comfort."

"That'll do," said the colonel, "know all that—won't neglect you. Another glass, old woman, and then you must go, for I expect Sir George and the bridegroom presently, to talk over matters of business."

Mrs. Smylar did not exactly like the ungallant mode in which her admirer was endeavouring to get rid of the speech she had so carefully studied; but she was not to be easily disconcerted, and with one of her

most melting looks she took the replenished glass and emptied it. When, however, Sandy Bruff made the customary demonstration by which he exhibited his inclination for the honours he considered due to his military rank, she rendered them with so evident an attachment to the service, the distinguished and susceptible officer was quite as much surprised as gratified.

"Eh—what—crying, Smylar!" exclaimed he, as he observed his companion immediately afterwards cover her face with her hands, fling herself back in her chair, and commence a battery of convulsive sobs, such as on a susceptible elderly gentleman like the gallant and disagreeable colonel, are certain of doing immense execution. "Why, bless my soul—I—I didn't mean—What *can* be the matter?"

The colonel speedily worked himself into a state of desperate perplexity. Believing she was taken with one of those hysterical

fits which seem so completely the peculiar right and property of the sex, he did not like to ring for assistance, as that would betray his housekeeper, whose after-dinner visits were, he thought, not known to the servants; and not being remarkable for his mental resources, he was completely bewildered as to what he ought to do to hasten her recovery before any one entered.

The expression of dismay and alarm spread over his features was most ludicrous, whilst he heavily rose from his chair, as a bright idea suddenly presented itself in the cloudy vista of his mind. He forthwith proceeded to fill a tumbler out of a glass water-jug that stood in the centre of the table; but the quick-witted actress heard the gurgling of the liquid as it flowed from one vessel into another, and with a provident care for her artificial curls, and equally artificial complexion, she allowed her hands to drop, her eyes to open, and her lips to sigh forth sun-

dry half audible, yet wonderfully eloquent sounds, which plainly enough denoted her return to consciousess.

"I'm very foolish, colonel; I know I am," exclaimed the panting, palpitating fair one, just in time to avert the coming inundation; "but my feelings ran away with me, and indeed, indeed, I cannot help—"

"That'll do—that'll do!" exclaimed her master, as his too sensitive housekeeper was in the act of squeezing out a very small tear from either eye with a corner of her pocket-handkerchief. "Glad it's no worse—thought you were in a fit, or a faint, or some abominable thing of the sort. But you're better now—eh, old woman? Come—another glass of claret will do you no harm."

"A woman cannot help her feelings, colonel, and they too often make sad work when they do overpower her. I have hitherto managed to keep mine in proper subjection; but when I recalled to mind your gentle-

manly kindness and considerateness, the many noble and generous qualities you possess, which it is impossible for any woman to see without admiring, too warmly for her peace, the individual they so eminently distinguish — and when I remembered the urgent and uncontrollable necessity there now is for me to remove myself out of their delightful influence—"

"Eh—what—how's this?" cried Sandy Bruff, again a little at fault. "Remove! Who says remove?—All fudge! You shall stay with me as long as you like, and let me catch anybody daring to find fault with you."

"Alas! it cannot be," exclaimed the pinched-in and pushed-out, lamp-oil and orange-peel heroine, as she diligently continued to nourish the very minute distillation going on at the corners of her eyes. "People *will* talk, and, as I have found to my inexpressible shame and mortification, they will also write. Oh! it is very bitter to have to

endure the malice and slander of the censorious. But my determination is made. I am unfortunately entirely dependent on the world's good opinion. I have but one course to adopt. Read *that*, colonel, and tell me, I implore you, if I am not right in deciding upon quitting your house, immediately after the marriage of your dear and excellent daughter."

Without saying a word further on the subject—for in truth, the gallant officer was a considerable deal too *posed* to say anything to the purpose—he took the letter, which the wily spider-brusher drew from a woman's ordinary receptacle for her most confidential communications, and proceeded to read it.

Smylar threw herself back in her chair, and again covered her face with her hands, but as she availed herself to the full extent of the accommodation offered by her open fingers, she of course saw the effect made by the perusal of the letter on her exceedingly

indignant master—which, by the way, she watched with all the intense eagerness with which a good mouser regards its approaching victim. And she had excellent reason for such eagerness, for on the result of the perusal of this letter all her ambitious hopes depended.

The colonel read, his face the while exhibiting the appearance of an animated prism, which was rendered very much more picturesque by the extraordinary variety of expressions that passed over it, arising from the frownings, and twitchings, and contortions that seemed to have seized upon every feature.

"The work of some spiteful old hag—some incarnate devil at mischief," exclaimed the angry officer—we might add quite oracularly. "Just like the one that was written to that old fool, Lady Gramm. Shouldn't wonder if Miss Pheezle wrote them both, for she pos-

sesses just sufficient talent to invent such despicable trash. I would I could bring her to a drum-head court-martial—by Jove, I'd punish her pretty handsomely."

"'Tis too bad," exclaimed his sobbing companion; "I never injured her in thought, word, or deed. A loss of any other kind I could bear; but as your friend Shakspeare says,

> "'He who filches from me my good name,
> Takes from me that which not enricheth him,
> And makes me poor indeed.'"

"That'll do—that'll do!" cried the gallant colonel, approaching her, as it could not be doubted, in one of his most affectionate moods. "Never mind, old woman—you may snap your fingers at Miss Pheezle and all her breed, seed, and generation. As for your leaving, I won't hear of such nonsense. You'll think better of it by-and-by, I can tell

you. It shall be your own fault if everything isn't soon settled as satisfactorily as any woman can desire. Come, hold up your head, and don't be a fool."

"Oh, colonel, my heart is *too* full," exclaimed the delighted manœuvrer, with a look that would have brought down thunders from the gods of Bullock's-smithy; and then she gracefully hid her face on the ample breast of her distinguished admirer, whose arms very readily enfolded her drooping figure.

Shortly after this, these interesting turtle-doves were suddenly startled by a long and loud burst of laughter, in which it was evident more than one voice joined.

The happy pair, as we, I suppose, must call them, were too happy to hear Mr. George Grindle's cab drive up to the door, the noise of which, it is however right to say, they might have failed to distinguish had they been otherwise engaged, as at the same mo-

ment, a cumbrous Yorkshire waggon was passing the door, each of its six horses creating a little concert of bells, which made every other sound in its vicinity completely inaudible.

The street-door, too, happened to be what, by the world down-stairs, is called "a-jar," the respectable Mr. Rumfit being on the step, conversing confidentially with another distinguished member of the butler's club living next door, who had stationed himself on the top of the adjoining area steps; and Mr. Rumfit, for reasons best known to himself, allowed Sir George Grindle and his son to pass him on their way to the room in which they usually found his master, and before he had closed the door, and could overtake them to announce their names to the colonel (which he had no intention of doing), they had succeeded in getting unobserved into the apartment, and beheld the pretty burlesque on the well-known statue of

Cupid and Psyche, the colonel and Mrs. Smylar were then and there creating.

"*Giove onnipotente!*" exclaimed the amiable ex-lieutenant of dragoons, "this *is* coming it slap, old fellow!"

"Bravo, colonel! Neck and neck this, as they say at Newmarket," added his respectable parent, in very like the same tone and manner.

"Uncommon like it," continued the other. "But did you ever!—as the girl said. I say, governor, don't this look desperately like the sort of thing they show at the theatres sometimes—something in the *tableau vivant* line? Shouldn't wonder if papa Bruff had offered to play Romeo at one of the great houses, and was rehearsing, with the assistance of this particularly nice Juliet, the most moving scene. Deuced moving, wasn't it?"

"Never saw anything half so perfect in its way," said Sir George.

"That'll do—that'll do!" cried old Bruff,

recovering a little from the confusion into which he had been thrown. "Vanish, Smylar! Retreat! Disperse!"

"Never say die, colonel," said the young *roué*, as he attempted to stop the progress of his intended father-in-law's wasp-waisted *verd antique*, as with her hands over her face, and her head drooping before her, she was making the best of her way out of the room. "Accidents will happen in the best regulated families, incomparable and too charming Smylar; don't give yourself the slightest uneasiness. I approve of the colonel's taste; and as for the governor, he's a trump. We'll be as dumb as fishes, depend on't. By Jove, I don't wonder at the colonel's partiality, and so forth—you are such an uncommon nice—"

"Now I beg—I implore—I entreat! This is so *very* distressing!" exclaimed the lady, in tones exceedingly like the most pitiable confusion, as she contrived to evade her persecutor's attempted hold, and make her escape.

As she hurried out of the room, she caught a glance of the respectable Mr. Rumfit enjoying his cachinations by himself in a corner of the hall, whilst certain sounds of a like nature proceeding from the lower flight of stairs, plainly told her that the butler was not the only one in the establishment the recent discovery had amused. Fully convinced it had been the effect of design—in which she exhibited her usual sagacity—she proceeded to her room, bent on the total ruin of "the whole set."

Sandy Bruff, as soon as Smylar effected her exit, got remarkably well *roasted* by the hopeful son and equally hopeful father, with whom he was about to be so closely connected. It was in vain that he "that'll-do'd" either one or the other: Sir George had not had his laugh out at the previous exhibition of the fair housekeeper's confidential intimacy with her gallant master, to which he had equally unexpectedly been made a witness,

and his excellent son and heir appeared as if it was impossible he could make too much of so good a thing. But although the colonel bore it very pleasantly for some time, he at last began to show signs of impatience. Had not the baronet judiciously changed the subject, "the respectable old fogy," as Mr. George Grindle afterwards allowed to his excellent parent, "might have run rusty;" and as putting him into an ill-humour might have considerably affected his chance of obtaining the very handsome share of *the stumpy*, which was now almost within his grasp, he thought himself much "too wide awake" to suffer his good fortune to slip through his fingers in this manner. Accordingly, immediately he received the hint from his cautious father, he discontinued all allusion to the affair, and went into so many and various revelations of similar adventures of his own, that he managed to put both his companions on their mettle, and story followed

story from the worthy trio, each of which rivalled the other in the sort of credit they conferred upon the narrator.

After a good deal of time passed in *such* pleasure, business was thought of, and as they were by this time in the best humour with each other, there was the less chance of any difference arising amongst them. The arrangements were found perfectly satisfactory; old Bruff had behaved very liberally, and neither Sir George nor his son was likely to make the slightest objection to anything which promised to be so much to their advantage. The evening ended with a quiet game at whist, the member of Crockford's, at his own particular request, taking "dummy," and by dint of his extraordinary good luck in always holding honours, and when it came to his deal, winning every bet on the turn-up card, —possibly by being gifted with that peculiar foresight some players possess—he managed to pass the time very profitably.

Still, in justice to this very amiable and interesting personage, we are bound to state, that in his proceedings against his father that was, and father-in-law that was to be, he exhibited the most strict impartiality. He did not obtain his winnings from one, without exerting the same remarkable skill and facility which procured for him the money of the other. It is time, however, to leave our accomplished ex-lieutenant, to see what is going on all this while at the Amershams'.

While her promised husband was thus advantageously passing his time, Jane Bruff was living in a state of the most intense excitement and disquietude. Mr. Francis Grindle was behaving towards her in a way that secured him the highest opinion of her excellent friends. Mr. and Mrs. Amersham made comparisons which could not have been otherwise than exceedingly odious to the dandy of Class B: and in the esteem of both, his despised half-brother was daily making

the most rapid advances. But although he fortified his heart with every proper and honourable feeling which could be drawn from a due consideration of the near relationship which would so soon exist between him and the amiable and beautiful girl with whom he was domesticated, he could not avoid seeing the sad effects created by the deep anxiety with which she looked upon her approaching union. He, too, well knew that she was doomed. He had had too complete an insight into the disposition and habits of the irresistible lady-killer, not to be aware of the dreadful nature of the fate of such a woman as Jane Bruff, when placed in the unenviable situation of his wife. He could no more help his admiration of her many excellences, than he could avoid giving the deepest and fullest sympathy for the misery which too evidently she was experiencing. Consequently, although his outward conduct towards her was as like that of a brother-in-

law as even old Bruff could have desired, his most secret feelings were hourly getting more of a nature which were, he could not deny, quite incompatible with that relationship. He began to experience a distress of mind and heart of the most painful character. To have fled from the place would, he considered, be heartlessly abandoning the fair victim to her fate; and to stay and see out the sacrifice was, he thought, a task scarcely endurable.

The "two days" George Grindle passed in town, which were prolonged to nearly a week by certain remarkably ingenious excuses on his part, were passed by Jane Bruff in such suffering, as none but a nature like hers, on the verge of a precipice such as threatened to annihilate her happiness, can imagine. More than ever she longed for the counsel of the wily Smylar; but a sort of indistinct hope that the mystery existing in the singular communication of Miles Blackmore, would afford her the means of escaping the

fate which grew more terrible every time she reflected upon it, in conjunction with an insurmountable dislike to beginning a clandestine correspondence with her father's housekeeper, induced her to keep her inclinations to herself. And well was it for her she did so!

Francis Grindle was apparently *only* attentive, considerate, and respectful; but when she listened to his conversation with her friends, which always exhibited such undeniable signs of a noble nature, and a mind stored with intelligence, how could she avoid increasing the great distaste she had acquired for the coarse, trifling, and vulgar small-talk of his odious half-brother? and how could she help noticing the sterling graces, both moral and personal, which in Francis made up the character of a perfect gentleman, and comparing them with the lacquer which was so disagreeably visible in the ex-lieutenant's particularly Brummagem manners? The more

she disliked the one, the more she admired the other; and in proportion to her admiration, increased her sense of misery at the prospect of losing all that was most conducive to her happiness, and of obtaining, instead, a combination of evils from which nothing but constant and hopeless misery could arise.

She suffered deeply — she suffered in silence, as she thought; for a girl of Jane's education possessed the highest sense of moral rectitude, which made her a most watchful guardian over her feelings. But her looks declared her wretchedness, and with an eloquence that language could not have rivalled. Both she and Francis did all that human nature could, to conceal from each other the mutual sympathy they felt. But this benefited neither. To keep up appearances, they endeavoured to go on in the old friendly way; they sang and played together, and occasionally, though not so often,

indulged in their customary walks and drives whenever they could do so with a third or fourth party: but there seemed now to be meanings in their favourite songs and duets they had never before noticed, which they found it impossible to pass without being strangely and deeply moved; and their rambles, though fruitful in thought and feeling to an extent previously unknown, passed without the slightest appearance of that outward communion of sentiment which once made them so delightful. Watchful as they both were, however, they both betrayed themselves.

On one occasion they were singing Jackson's lovely duet, "Love in thine eyes for ever plays," which they had often gone through together without finding anything in the words or music to create any remark; but they had scarcely reached the line,

"How different is my fate from thine,"

when they seemed mutually to discover that they had got on forbidden ground, and that they were making known the feelings they were most anxious to conceal. Each voice suddenly grew tremulous and uncertain, and the time all at once became much slower. The words which followed,

> " No outward mark of love is mine:
> My brow is clouded by despair,
> And grief, love's bitter foe, is there,"

were sung, or rather murmured, in a state of the most painful embarrassment. Francis Grindle would have given all he was worth in the world to have found some excuse for turning over the leaves, and breaking off what he was singing; and if his fair companion had not been sitting to the piano, she must have fallen into a swoon. As it was, she first experienced a tightness at the throat that nearly took away all power of utterance — her heart beat with a most distressing

rapidity, and every thing began to swim before her eyes. Though she mechanically continued the performance, she felt that in another moment she must lose all consciousness of the surrounding scene. Fortunately, the attention of her friend Emma was attracted by the unusual feebleness and tremulousness apparent in the voices of the singers. She saw at a glance the peculiar nature of the case. With a woman's ready tact, and with an equally feminine delicacy, she aroused them both to a sense of their position, and managed to make them sing the duet to the end. But that was the last of such performances. Indeed, they not only did not sing together again, but avoided as much as possible all similar employments.

The next day Mr. George made his appearance. If before, he was too well satisfied of his own ability as a lady-killer to heed the presence of his younger brother, he now appeared to experience a much greater

degree of security and self-satisfaction. He could not see the dislike, amounting almost to abhorrence, with which he was regarded by his intended wife. By this time, however, she stood not alone in this respect. The *roué* did not seem to think it worth while to take the pains he had done in his former visit to make himself agreeable; and Mr. and Mrs. Amersham, who had become warmly attached to Francis, found their former prepossessions changing fast into the most unqualified disapprobation. The situation of poor dear Jane was much and earnestly canvassed by them... They had both hoped that Miles Blackmore would ere this have procured such information relative to the lady at Versailles, as would have put an end to this disagreeable marriage; but several days had passed without their again hearing from him, and although they had the firmest reliance on his effective intervention, and were fully impressed with the notion

that he had something very important to disclose, they could not help regarding the very short period now remaining before Jane's fate must be decided for good or evil, with intense anxiety. Emma counselled her friend wisely, as she had always done; and had it not been for such advice, poor Jane Bruff would inevitably have fallen into the meshes the two-legged spider in her father's house had so elaborately constructed.

In due time the colonel's summons arrived. All the necessary preparations had been completed, and Jane must immediately return to town with her friends, her wedding being settled to take place in three days. And now comes what the Frenchman called the commencement of the end.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

To the excited and miserable Jane, time seemed to be passing with something like miraculous rapidity. The more she saw of her intended husband, the more strongly grew her detestation of his manners, his person, and his principles; and in the proportion that he sank in her estimation, rose his amiable, gentlemanlike, and accomplished relative. As the hated marriage was now fearfully near, each of the brothers arrived at the point beyond which there appeared to be no possibility of getting.

The lady-killer was regarded by her with a mingled feeling of contempt and disgust, by no means flattering to the self-love of that exceedingly vain and selfish individual; whilst the noble characteristics of "the saint," as Francis was sometimes styled in derision by his two nearest relations, were so often and so admiringly considered, as materially to interfere with the reflections which Jane Bruff ought to have given to the important duties she would so soon be called upon to fulfil. She was looking more pale and anxious every day that brought her nearer to the fate she dreaded even to contemplate. Hope seemed to have deserted her. The continued silence of Miles Blackmore threw a gloom over her young heart, which even her apparently still sanguine friend Emma failed entirely to remove.

Notwithstanding appearances, both Mr. and Mrs. Amersham were very much disappointed by the unaccountable inattention of

their friend, after raising their expectations so high as he had done by the peculiar nature of his last communication. In their frequent private discussions of Jane's situation, misgivings would intrude. Both by this time were fully satisfied that her union with Mr. George Grindle. did not hold out any great prospect of happiness, and both had sufficient reasons of their own for believing that with Mr. Francis Grindle lot would be an enviable one. Although they could not have more completely agreed than they did in their desire to see their dear Jane the wife of the younger brother, in preference to the elder, they were both as fully convinced of the impropriety, indeed impossibility, of their doing anything in opposition to the wishes of her parent. They were now under his roof, and it wanted but three days to the day fixed for the wedding. Deeply interested as they were in whatever concerned Jane's welfare,

and convinced as they might be that there was but a remote chance of its preservation in the forthcoming marriage, they, under the circumstances, had no excuse for any open interference, and could not be justified in having recourse to a clandestine encouragement of her disinclination to the husband provided for her. The only thing that could be done, their anxiety urged them to lose no time about; and a very pressing letter was written to Miles Blackmore, stating the exact time fixed for the wedding, and all attendant particulars, and imploring him, if it was in his power to do anything that would put an end to Mr. George Grindle's pretensions to the hand of their mutual friend, to set about it instantly, or it would be too late.

The state of mind in which Francis Grindle had existed during the last few days, may, as we are inclined to think some one has said before, be more easily imagined than de-

scribed. His high sense of honour still held sufficient control over the deep sympathy and admiration with which he could not help regarding the affianced wife of his brother, to keep such a check over his feelings as sufficed to prevent any outward manifestation of them; but in spite of principle, philosophy, religion, and every other aid such a nature as his was sure of employing on such an occasion, the struggle between inclination and duty became every day more painful. He appeared overpowered by some extraordinary influence that held him chained to the spot, an agonized spectator of the sufferings of the only woman he had ever met with who fulfilled his exalted conception of the feminine character, and he was but too well satisfied the fate with which she was threatened was a horrible one. He knew that he could do nothing in her favour; and whatever might be the nature of the sentiments she had inspired in him, with a modesty

natural to such a disposition, he could not convince himself that her regard for him was anything more than what society would readily sanction under the circumstances. His own agitation during the performance of the duet described in the last chapter, rendered him blind to hers; but had he been satisfied that she preferred him to the amiable ex-lieutenant of dragoons as much as she did, anything like endeavouring to supplant his brother in her affections, seemed to him so discreditable, that he could not have been brought to take advantage at such a time of her partiality. There appeared to remain, for him, nothing but a patient resignation to circumstances, and an ardent hope, that her married life might be as different as possible from the gloomy picture of it he had drawn. And thus he went on from day to day, and from hour to hour, doing his best to assume nothing beyond a brotherly interest towards her, and to disguise the intense anxiety with

which he contemplated the brief period which had to elapse before her fate would be sealed.

As "the consummation so devoutly to be wished" of Mr. George Grindle's marriage to the heiress approached, that accomplished gentleman, and remarkably fine specimen of the dandy belonging to Class B, experienced an increasing degree of uneasiness. His heart, hard as it was, was not so thoroughly callous, as to be totally indifferent to the misery he was about to inflict upon the devoted Ellen and his unoffending child; and with "the compunctious visitings" he endured when he contemplated this contingency, there came a sense of insecurity, which was still more unpleasant. Ellen had always been a most regular correspondent; how she contrived to write so much and so frequently was a mystery to him; but the fulness of a loving woman's heart was far beyond the reach of his very narrow philosophy. To his

great surprise he had not heard from her since he replied to her strong but vain appeal to his feelings as a father. At any other time he would have been glad enough to have been relieved from the *bore*, as he considered it, of perusing her exceedingly affectionate letters; but he had a dread of Mr. Miles Blackmore enlightening her on many subjects of which he was so very desirous of her remaining ignorant till Jane Bruff became Mrs. George Grindle, and, what was of much more consequence to him, he had got possession of the liberal supply of "the stumpy" he was to obtain with her, he had such excellent and pressing reasons for requiring. He tried hard to satisfy himself that Nelly had taken his refusal to hasten over to see his sick child so much to heart, she could not bring herself to write again; he even would have found consolation in the conviction that poor Tiney was much worse, and the attentive mother in too distressed a state to write again; but the

conversation he had had at the Amershams' with Mr. Danbury and his host, recurred to him with a most painful accuracy of recollection, and all his fears, doubts, and conjectures settled upon Miles Blackmore.

However uncomfortable might have been the state in which the wretched Jane or the equally unhappy Francis Grindle passed the brief interval before the approaching marriage, it was exceeded in the case of the individual for whose advantage it had been thought of. A consciousness of guilt—of such guilt as there could be no extenuating—of conduct mean, dastardly, and cruel, alike unworthy of a man and a gentleman, and a fear of exposure, haunted him to such an extent as to deprive him, in a great measure, of his ordinary assurance, and make his conduct appear so singular as to attract the notice and increase the suspicions of the Amershams. He drank, as though to drown reflection, and was evidently suffering under

great excitement. His face was very pale, his gaze both gloomy and restless; and though he made frequent attempts to shake off the apprehensions that oppressed him, and assume his customary free and easy style, they were, as he emphatically would have styled them, "decidedly no go."

Sandy Bruff was the only one of the party who appeared perfectly at his ease; indeed, he was much more agreeable in his manner than he had ever been known to be; a sure sign that he enjoyed a state of unusual satisfaction. All was progressing in the manner he wished; he met with no opposition; the preparations were at last satisfactorily concluded, and he had scarcely anything to do beyond anticipating the agreeable life he was henceforth to lead, under the management of the incomparable Smylar. Mrs. Amersham's lady-like manners had made a favourable impression upon him, which for reasons of her own she was exceedingly

desirous to improve, and he had consulted her on various matters connected with the approaching ceremony—much to the annoyance of his wasp-waisted and wasp-natured housekeeper, who looked with a deep and bitter jealousy on any intimacy approaching confidence with any one besides herself, and she soon began to task her engineering to destroy it as effectually as she had done in the case of Lady Gramm.

The many excellent qualities of Amersham also were far better appreciated than they had ever been by his host, who really seemed to strive to make himself agreeable; and in the after-dinner conversations he had with his friends at his own table, he found a sort of light breaking in upon the dense fog that had so long enveloped his mind, from coming in close contact with natures so enlightened and gentlemanlike as those of Amersham and Francis Grindle, and much to his own surprise he listened to them with respect,

and did his possible to appear worthy of their estimation.

When "our dear Jane" returned to her father's house, the indefatigable Smylar exclaimed, in the convenient privacy of her own apartment, and in a style that would have thrown the dramatic critics of Bullock's-smithy into ecstasies, "Now comes the tug of war!" and she determined to put forth all her powers to make the struggle she saw must ensue, as advantageous as possible to herself. One glance at the destined victim, without any assistance from Miss Harris, was sufficient to disclose to her the exact state of the case. But notwithstanding that young person had become the object of her fellow servant's especial hatred, the latter condescended to exert herself more than she had ever done, to make her believe she was her most devoted friend; and with this, and the assistance of the curaçoa, she did her best to obtain from her all the information she thought necessary for

her purpose. Harris, although she had been put upon her guard, was as communicative as could have been desired, and Smylar listened attentively and smiled exultingly. That Jane Bruff would escape if she could, from a marriage evidently so detestable to her, our Machiavelli in petticoats was perfectly satisfied. That she *should* escape she was determined. Her flight she had already planned, and had contrived all the various manœuvres that were to alienate her father's heart from her, and obtain the fortune Mr. George Grindle had promised himself.

The only apparent obstacle to the success of her schemes was Mrs. Amersham. Although Smylar behaved with extreme caution before her, to appear in her eyes nothing more than a confidential domestic—although she assumed a modest and respectful demeanour, and studied the part of the respectable housekeeper with more attention than she had ever done before—for some inexpli-

cable reason or another she never could feel at her ease in that lady's presence. In vain she appeared devoted to her young mistress — in vain she tried her most irresistible powers of pleasing her friend—she felt satisfied that Mrs. Amersham saw through all her artifices, and she was afraid would counteract them. In fact, Emma entered the house with any thing but a favourable opinion of that consummate piece of cunning, and possessed penetration enough to suspect her objects before she had been an inmate of it four-and-twenty hours. The wily Smylar therefore found almost all her efforts to pour the poison of her tongue into the ear of the unhappy Jane unavailing, through the constant watchfulness of Mrs. Amersham.

Once only had she been so fortunate to find her alone, in spite of a great deal of clever plotting and planning for that purpose, and she had scarcely had time to urge her miserable victim, with all the serpent and

the fox mingled in her nature, to take the only step that could free her from the fate impending over her, when she was interrupted by the watchful Emma, whose suspicions were immediately awakened by the state of excitement in which she found her young friend; and not long after the tempter had left the room, and placed her ear at the key-hole, she learned enough to justify her in taking a decisive step to put a stop to that odious menial's mischievous influence.

Nor was Smylar altogether idle with the gallant and recently not quite so much as usual the disagreeable colonel. Her after dinner colloquies, it is true, were at an end, but she contrived to find other, and as she fancied better opportunities for her confidential communications. At what period of the day or night these occurred, we have no other means of ascertaining than might be gathered from a slight creaking in the colonel's door, followed a few minutes afterwards by a similar noise in

her own, notwithstanding a careful oiling of the hinges by the incomparable she herself—that was heard every morning, at least an hour before any of the servants were expected to be stirring. Whether after the customary "tucking up" she thought proper to return to her master's chamber, to be the more certain that she had neglected nothing necessary to his comfort during the night, as possibly she felt bound to do by virtue (?) of her office, we have no evidence beyond the very curious coincidence just mentioned. But we are quite certain she *did* find occasions to endeavour to fill his mind with doubts of the Amershams, and with suspicions of his daughter, and we are equally well assured that, to her extreme mortification, she failed of producing anything like the effect she desired. Whether he was too well satisfied with the parties she was *hinting* against, or was too sleepy to attend to her insinuations, or not disposed to conversation,

or had swallowed too much wine to understand what she meant—she invariably found all her talent set at nought by an impatient "that'll do," or the commencement of a nasal obligato accompaniment to her voice, with the duration and power of which she was too familiar to hope to effect anything for that night.

Baffled in all her deep laid schemes, yet of too enterprising a spirit to allow her prey to escape, the artful and unprincipled schemer made preparations for one grand effort. But while she is hatching *her* plot, we must lose no time in endeavouring to complete ours. We have already said sufficient to prove that the housekeeper was in any thing but *good* odour with the rest of the establishment, and since the return of Harris there had been such revelations in the servants' hall, that the ringletted and spindle-shanked favourite of the worthy colonel could not but be looked upon as "the common enemy."

By means which will be explained presently, an insight had been obtained into her unprincipled manœuvring, which, in any other family, when made known, ought to have procured her instant dismissal; but they all well knew their master's partiality, and considered that any attempt to "bell the cat" would be attended with both danger and difficulty. Nevertheless it was resolved that the attempt should be made, and the very morning of the marriage was the time fixed on for this hazardous experiment to "come off."

The colonel was in one of his happiest humours, seated in his dressing-room, in full fig for the ceremony, attended only by his excellent butler the respectable Mr. Rumfit, to whom he was giving various directions, and hearing various small matters of intelligence which that gallant officer never objected to when in his amiable moods. After sundry preliminary hems and haws, Rumfit

cleverly led the conversation to Lady Gramm, and having intimated that he had heard of an anonymous letter having been sent to her ladyship, stated that he had discovered "quite promiscuously" a clue to the writer. The subject was rather a ticklish one, but the colonel was in the right mood, and desired to know the particulars, with the full intention, if he could obtain the ocular proof of Miss Pheezle's delinquency, to reward her handsomely for her interference. Upon this encouragement Mr. Rumfit further stated, that as he was approaching the house of an old fellow-servant of his, now in business as a greengrocer in the neighbourhood of the Regent's-park, who also officiated as a post-master, he recognised a female whom he well knew, enter the shop, which she almost immediately afterwards left. He had the curiosity to inquire of his old acquaintance what that person who had just left him wanted, and ascertained she had merely

called to post a letter, and had then the further curiosity to look at the letter, and observed that it was directed to Lady Gramm; and he did not put it down till he had examined it so narrowly that he should know it again in an instant, by certain marks which he detailed. Upon the butler giving his description, the colonel unlocked a drawer and carefully examined a letter it contained.

"That'll do, Rumfit," exclaimed his master, indignantly tossing back the document, "the same to a T. I got possession of the infernal thing, intending to return it to the old fool who gave it me, if I failed in discovering the writer; and now she shall have it, with my compliments to her precious friend and toady by whom it was concocted—for the individual you saw was of course Miss Pheezle?"

"I beg your pardon, colonel, she was no such person," replied the butler, with an

exceedingly grave and mysterious countenance.

"Eh, what? not Miss Pheezle?" exclaimed the gallant officer, looking strangely bewildered, "who the deuce was she then?"

The butler looked to the door significantly, approached his master closely, and with a glance such as he would have fixed upon any one caught in the act of purloining a portion of the family plate, replied, "Mrs. Smylar."

At this announcement the worthy colonel appeared (as it was afterwards picturesquely stated in the servants' hall) "took all of a heap." The dying dolphin could not have exhibited a greater variety of colours than for a few minutes his face displayed. He was so astonished and confounded as to be unable even to utter his customary "that'll do;" and before he could recover from his confusion, Mr. Rumfit produced a paper for his perusal, and stated that Smylar having

been observed by one of the servants, at about the same period as the posting of the letter, tearing up a piece of paper very carefully, and throwing the fragments out of window, all the pieces having fallen into the back-yard, they were, from "motives of curiosity," carefully collected, and after considerable trouble, pasted together again, piece by piece, on a page of writing-paper. The colonel, without saying a word, began to examine the recovered fragments, and had the pleasure of reading, in Smylar's handwriting, an exact copy, or more accurately speaking, an exact original, of the identical anonymous letter which had caused his rupture with Lady Gramm. Even in his foggy mind there remained now no doubt of the offender; nor was he long in conjecturing the author of a similar production which had apparently given so much uneasiness to his amiable and devoted housekeeper; and though slowly, there very clearly dawned

upon his understanding a pretty accurate conception of the particular motives for which they had been written.

Sandy Bruff, though very wrathfully inclined, felt a little, indeed something more than a little, uneasiness. Clear as was the case against the offending party, certain prudential motives restrained him from entering into a quarrel with her. But while the best portion of his seven senses were sunk into a remarkably unpleasant reverie, he was roused by a message brought by Harris, that Mrs. Amersham desired a few minutes' conversation with him in the back drawing-room. He prepared to obey the summons, feeling, as he drew his ponderous form along, exactly like a schoolboy, who, having devoured the sweets he had dishonestly obtained, begins to see, too distinctly to be pleasant, the coming horsewhipping that is to punish him for his roguery.

Whilst our distinguished field-officer was

being enlightened as to the character of his unprincipled favourite, his miserable daughter was in her dressing-room, chewing the cud, not of sweet, but of very bitter fancies. Harris had finished her labours in decorating the unwilling bride, and had left her a few minutes to her own reflections, to seek Mrs. Amersham — partly for a purpose of her young mistress's—partly for a purpose of her own. Nothing had been heard of or from Miles Blackmore, and the poor girl had given herself up to despair. She sat in her bridal garments, a woeful mockery of the part she was about to play—her hands open upon her lap, and her eyes fixed in a deep and tearful stare upon the floor. From this unnatural stupor she was disturbed by a friendly exclamation, in a kind voice, close to her, and raising slowly her heavy eyes, she recognised, and not without a visible thrill of pleasure, her father's incomparable housekeeper. Smylar knew the time for

action had arrived, had planned everything with her usual art, and had determined on making the best use of the occasion. The state in which she found her unhappy mistress, one might suppose would have turned the hardest heart from so dark a purpose as hers; but the odious and heartless wretch saw in it only the best prospect of success to her abominable designs, and in the delight with which she was recognised, beheld a sure sign that the time for her interposition had been admirably chosen.

"Bless my heart, my dear Miss Jane, why positively your hand is as cold as a stone!" exclaimed the wretch, as she, with every appearance of affectionate interest, took up in her own hard palms one of the small, ladylike hands of her victim, "and your countenance is really dreadful—

> 'Just such a face, so wan, so woe-begone,
> Drew Priam's curtains in the dead of night.'"

The poor unhappy girl smiled faintly at

the dramatic reminiscence of her companion, but replied only with a heavy sigh.

"Ah! 'tis as I expected it would be!" cried the lady of the ringlets, with a mournful shake of the head. "This odious marriage has become more hateful to you, the nearer it approaches. Nor could it be otherwise. Little as you know of Mr. George Grindle, you must have seen enough to render the very idea of him as a husband intolerable. But I, who have been, as I may say, behind the scenes, have become acquainted with facts regarding him, which ought to render his very name inexpressibly offensive to a delicate female. There cannot be a doubt that your existence, passed with such a man, must be a life of misery, such as no language could do justice to."

"I am afraid my prospect is not an enviable one," observed Jane Bruff, sorrowfully.

"And what a different being is Mr. Francis!" exclaimed the tempter, with a tone

and look of pleasing exultation. At the mention of his name, Jane slightly blushed, and the languid beating of her heart grew quicker and stronger. But she said nothing. Smylar was too intent on her prey not to have noticed the effect she had produced.

"He is indeed a noble specimen of a man! The very soul of honour—the perfection of what is gentlemanlike—at once the *beau-idéal* of a husband and a lover."

Smylar here seemed bent on excelling herself; but the superfine phrases she had spoken with an affectation of such sublime enthusiasm, were not her own—they were borrowed from a romance, the high-flown language of which she had delighted to study when she was devoting her affections to the respectable young hair-dresser, mentioned in an early chapter of this work.

Jane sighed heavily. She thought for a moment how perfect might have been her happiness had she been allowed to select a

husband for herself, who felt for her the proper degree of regard; but a sense of the uselessness of such thoughts quickly presented itself to her mind.

"Had it ever been my good fortune to have been loved by so superior a being as Francis Grindle," added her companion, with an upward gaze full of a sort of spiritual ecstasy, "I should have felt bound by every law, human and divine, to have left undone nothing a grateful woman could do with propriety to secure his happiness. But when I behold him as I have, a man so thoroughly deserving an honourable affection, being a victim to a passion that is evidently preying upon his vitals, whilst you who have his fate in your hands, refrain from making the slightest effort to save him, I have no hesitation in saying I cannot understand such conduct. That he loves you with an intensity of soul it is the lot of few, even among

the most fortunate of women, to inspire, cannot be doubted for a single moment."

Here poor Jane began perceptibly to tremble, and her look plainly expressed the excitement under which she was listening to "the leporous distilment" that was being poured into her ears.

"You are cruel both to yourself and to him—nay, positively inhuman," continued Smylar, intent on following up her advantage as rapidly as possible, for she knew well enough her time was limited, and that the opportunity of which she had so cleverly availed herself, if lost, could not recur again. "You are about to commit a suicide on your own happiness, which must at the same time be a murder on the happiness of one whose existence ought to be dearer to you than your own."

"Forbear, Smylar, I implore you!" exclaimed the agitated girl. "He has given

me no reason to believe he regarded me in any other character than as a sister."

"I know to the contrary," replied the other, emphatically. "I *know* that he worships you as man rarely worships woman—he feels as none but a Francis Grindle could feel towards the woman who is honoured with so proud a gift as *his* affections."

"He has said not a word to me on the subject—and even if he had I cannot—"

"Yes you can—you ought—you *must*. Every true womanly feeling in your breast calls upon you to take the necessary steps to save him from the agony into which you are most undeservedly plunging him, by your utter disregard of yourself and him."

The poor girl mournfully shook her head; her heart was too full for utterance, and she seemed impressed with the idea that it was now too late to make any effort to set aside the marriage.

"Rely upon *me*, my dear Miss Jane," said

the specious, persevering hypocrite. "Believe me, I feel for you most sincerely. As a woman, I cannot stand by, a quiet spectator of the miserable sacrifice so soon to take place. I have done what few in my dependent situation would have dared to do; but then I have looked on you almost with the love of a sister, and would willingly save you at any hazard." Seeing that her destined victim merely looked at her inquiringly, she continued in a more urgent manner,—"You must ask no questions; the moments are precious, and will not admit of being wasted in useless and unnecessary inquiries. With the sanction and knowledge of one who is in a state of agony scarcely to be imagined, I have devised a plan for your immediate escape from the horrible fate with which you are threatened."

"Has he indeed a knowledge of such a plan? Does he desire me to avail myself of it?" inquired Jane, in a hesitating manner,

which sounded in the ears of the unscrupulous menial, who was seeking so earnestly to betray her young mistress to her ruin, as the prelude to a complete victory.

Smylar met the inquiring look unflinchingly, and with admirable assurance, replied,

"He implored me to succour you from an evil he regards as worse than a thousand deaths, and prayed me to urge you to fly while flight was possible. Nothing can be so easy as your escape. I have taken care that every one in the house shall be so employed at this moment, that you may be sure of reaching the house-door unobserved, which I will open myself and close for you. Turn to the right, and at the corner of the next street you will find a post-chaise and four fleet horses. The postilions have orders to drive you to some highly-respectable friends of mine who live quite retired, a little way in the country, and with whom you will be perfectly safe, till your marriage

with Mr. Francis Grindle can be satisfactorily brought about. Put on this large cloak, and any of your ordinary bonnets, and your dress will escape observation. While you are on the road to happiness, you may be sure of my best exertions with the colonel to make your peace with him, and after the first burst of his fury is over, I am quite certain there will be no difficulty at all in making him reasonable. Come—let us not lose the precious time."

"No, it cannot be," said Jane, avoiding the proffered cloak her officious *friend* was about to place over her shoulders; "my father has set his heart upon this marriage. I cannot, I dare not disobey him."

"Foolish girl!" cried the other, impatiently. "Your father has no heart in the matter. He consults only his own ease and ambition. He neither cares for your feelings nor your inclinations; why should you trouble yourself about his?"

"He is my father," said her young mistress.

"He is your tyrant, you should say," replied her companion; "and you without a struggle will allow yourself to be the victim of his senseless despotism. Before I would sacrifice myself for such an unnatural, selfish, obstinate old fool—"

"That'll do—that'll do!" here unexpectedly exclaimed a voice that seemed to freeze the very blood in the now incautious housekeeper's veins, and looking up, even her daring spirit quailed beneath the fury of the colonel's gaze, as, accompanied by Mrs. Amersham, he approached through a closet that opened into Jane's apartment, and might be entered from another chamber which the Amershams had as their sitting-room.

Emma hastened to her young friend, and whispered something which seemed in some measure to have reassured her, taken as she was so completely by surprise, by the method

Mrs. Amersham had employed to open the colonel's eyes as to the proceedings of the cunning, scheming, calculating Smylar, directly she knew the latter had obtained access to Jane's chamber.

The colonel was under some restraint doubtless, from the presence of his daughter and her friend, or his rage would have exploded on the head of the detected manœuvrer more violently than it did; but it was quite sufficiently powerful to satisfy its object that her reign was over; and great as she was in resources, she saw that there was no remedy but to beat a retreat as quickly as she could. Old Bruff left the room without saying a word to Jane, perhaps from his mind being completely filled with the treachery of his despicable favourite —perhaps from his not having anything at hand particularly worth saying.

A few hours afterwards a small crowd of idlers were standing on the pavement, staring

at a bridal party leaving their carriages to enter the church of St. George's, Hanover-square. The party consisted of the Fathers and Sons of this eventful history, Jane and her bridesmaids, two young ladies of her acquaintance, who looked the characters they represented as prettily as they dressed them; and Mr. and Mrs. Amersham. It is doubtful whether so singular a group ever before entered those doors for a similar purpose. Had not their object been so conspicuous, it was easy for any stranger to imagine that nothing was so distant from their ideas as a wedding. With the exception of the bridesmaids, who evidently thought they were bound in duty to infuse all the happiness they could into their charming features, they seemed in as much distress as though about to follow some much loved relative to an early grave.

Sir George had attempted a little in the facetious mood, but when he found

he did not raise a smile in either of his companions, he desisted—the sooner perhaps from not being without anxiety himself.

Sandy Bruff looked considerably more doltish than usual, and very much out of temper. To tell the exact truth, he did not now care half so much about completing this marriage as he had done the day before. The dismissal of Smylar had completely destroyed the pleasant arrangements he had for the last few weeks considered with such peculiar satisfaction; and, deprived of his convenient housekeeper and amiable daughter also, he could not see how he should be enabled to exist with any prospect of comfort. However ambitious he might have been of seeing Jane, "my lady," he never anticipated purchasing that distinction at the price of any pleasure he had been in the habit of enjoying. He was very well aware he could not now creditably put a stop to the affair;

nevertheless there is very good reason for believing he would have done so if he could.

No one could look less like a bridegroom than the estimable individual selected to play that enviable part on the present occasion. He seemed to have a settled conviction in his mind, to use his own peculiar phraseology, that there was "a screw loose" somewhere; and he also began to entertain a vague suspicion that his connexion with the devoted Nelly could not be so easily destroyed as he had at first imagined. He felt exceedingly uncomfortable, and had it not been for peculiarly pressing reasons, in the shape of a very large family of *duns*, he would, even at that late hour, have gladly "cut the whole concern." When placed in a pew till the clergyman made his appearance, he took the opportunity of whispering to his worthy parent, with his usual disregard of time and place, "I say,

governor, I never felt so uncommon queer; this sort of thing don't suit my book at all, and if it wasn't for the uncomfortably particular necessity of the case, I'd bolt off the course."

"The governor" did not seem to think it necessary to reply.

Francis Grindle and Jane Bruff felt all the endurance under suffering, of martyrs tied to the stake. These brief minutes appeared to have compressed into them such an intensity of feverish uneasiness as brought on a total insensibility to every thing going on around them.

Mr. and Mrs. Amersham seemed to take less interest in the proceedings than might have been expected from them. Whether they had given up all idea of Miles Blackmore's agency being now available, or whether they rested with more confidence than before on his successful interposition, there were no means of judging; but they certainly

wore an air of composure that under the circumstances could not but be regarded as surprising.

Increasing anxiety, however manifested itself in the features of both when the bride and bridegroom approached the altar, and the marriage ceremony had commenced. They were evidently most painfully disappointed—they exchanged looks which in each expressed equal dismay and astonishment. Poor Jane then was doomed! Her fate was sealed! She was henceforth to be the companion of a *roué* of the most selfish class. Their hearts sank within them when they heard the clergyman's voice asking, "Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?" but to their great relief, before the question was concluded, they heard quick footsteps approaching, and in a moment they beheld the long-expected Miles Blackmore in earnest discourse with the reverend gentleman. He was distinctly heard to say

"You will, I am sure, sir, readily excuse this interruption, when you learn it is for the purpose of preventing a most iniquitous transaction. The person you are about joining in marriage with this lady has a wife living. I have the necessary witnesses at hand to prove her right to that title."

The clergyman appeared both indignant and surprised, and the clerk of course, as in duty bound, still more so. Jane had fainted, and was in the affectionate arms of her friend Emma, with Francis watching over her. The colonel looked somewhat confused, and wished himself any where but where he was; and the bridesmaids, poor things, shrank from the unwelcome intruder as though they were of opinion he had done a very discreditable thing, in disturbing the interesting ceremony at so interesting a moment. At last, by the direction of the clergyman, the party adjourned to the vestry, with the exception of the baronet and his

eldest son, who found it most agreeable to them to leave the church as quickly as they could, and this in the confusion of the moment they succeeded in doing without attracting attention. In the vestry they found, already assembled, Nelly in deep mourning, and evidently in as deep affliction, with Mrs. Eversfield and her younger daughter and two or three strangers; and such an examination of the affair was gone into as satisfied the clergyman that a second marriage was out of the question, and convinced the colonel he had escaped a rather disreputable connexion.

It appeared that the amiable ex-lieutenant of dragoons had in the course of his wanderings formed a slight acquaintance with Miss Hastings, the Nelly of our narrative, the orphan daughter of a Major Hastings, of the East India Company's service, who on returning on leave of absence from India, where her mother had fallen a sacrifice to

the climate, had found a second mother for his young and beautiful girls, but had scarcely become aware of her many admirable qualities, when he began to show signs of a constitution broken by hard service in the burning East, and after a rapid illness sank into the grave. The second Mrs. Hastings, though she was exceedingly fond of the charge committed to her, discovered a year or two after her widowhood that she would be better able to forward their interests by marrying a pious clergyman, with an excellent income, named Eversfield. He was very kind to the children, and took care that their education should be worthy of their family; but he died suddenly of apoplexy at Versailles, where he had lately taken a residence, and Mrs. Eversfield once more found herself the sole guardian of her dear major's two charming girls. Now, however, she was in a condition, by living economically, to furnish them with the due

proportion of accomplishments, and make arrangements for their welfare should she, like poor dear Eversfield, be called suddenly away.

This excellent woman was staying with her step-daughters at an obscure watering-place in the north of England, where she had been residing for a few weeks for the benefit of the health of the young people and herself, when Mr. George Grindle, who was shooting pheasants in the neighbourhood, found them out, and renewed the slight acquaintance he had formed with them a year before at Versailles. He was, as the phrase is, so "struck" with the beauty of Ellen, a fair young creature, scarcely seventeen, as all at once very much to neglect his friend's capital preserves, and very much to attach himself to Mrs. Eversfield's pretty little cottage. At this period the dandy of Class B was a different sort of person in his manners and principles to what

he became at the commencement of this tale. We will not say he was perfect even then, but he exhibited nothing of the coarseness of feeling, and deadness of moral principle, which he shows so prominently in some passages of this work. He was remarkably respectful to the still goodlooking mother-in-law, and earnest in his devotion to the lovely, and, too soon for her peace, loving Nelly.

Now Mrs. Eversfield, like a prudent woman, made certain inquiries respecting her rather dashing acquaintance, and finding he was the eldest son of a baronet, she felt assured he must be the honourable man he appeared, and congratulated herself on having procured so good a husband for the orphan daughter of her dear major: George Grindle was therefore allowed to do almost as he pleased at the cottage, which permission, to do him justice, we must say was superfluous.

George had already contrived to make himself at home, not only in the cottage, but in the heart of the lovely girl, who was its greatest ornament. He put forth all his seductions as a lady-killer; and over the young and artless mind with which he so constantly associated, they were but too successful. We cannot describe all the arts that were employed to influence the feelings of a loving and trusting heart; but they must have met with little opposition; for one fine morning, neither Mr. George Grindle nor Miss Hastings were to be found. A hurried letter of a few lines, blotted with tears, written by the fair fugitive, stating that she was sure to be happy, and praying for her mother's forgiveness and blessing, was discovered on her dressing-table. Mrs. Eversfield did not despair; she felt satisfied that the eldest son of a baronet of long standing could not act like a villain, and waited with patience and hope, for further intelligence.

The ardent lover found no difficulty in persuading the companion of his flight to allow herself to be called and considered his wife till the ceremony could be properly performed. His immediate destination was the nearest port, and fortunately for her it was a Scottish one; and at the inn at which they stayed till they could embark for France, the youthful and innocent appearance of Mrs. Grindle, as she was called, attracted the attention of the landlady, a shrewd but motherly dame, and she resolved to save her from the ruin with which she was threatened. By assuming before the gentleman doubts of the propriety of his connexion with "the young lassie" who accompanied him, and expressing no slight indignation that the respectability of her house should be endangered by their coming there, she got him to assure her, before witnesses, that the lady was his wife, which he did with a monstrous affectation of indignation at this having been doubted. Mrs. Mc Fillpot made all sorts of apologies;

nevertheless, she lost no time in getting, with the assistance of a worthy baillie of her acquaintance, the proper depositions to prove Nelly's legal right to the title the incautious *roué* had publicly allowed, and when she presented them to her, gave her, a world of good advice as to their value, and the use she was to make of them when necessary. The poor girl was very grateful, and cried very much; but as her amiable lord and "husband" was absent, engaging a passage in a vessel that was to sail next morning for the French coast, and afterwards looked in at a billiard-room where he lingered several hours, he remained profoundly ignorant of the little plot that had been so cleverly hatched against him. The papers were placed at the bottom of one of her trunks, where they remained undisturbed and almost forgotten.

Mr. George Grindle was however a little surprised that Nelly never made any complaint of his taking no steps to fulfil his promise of making her his wife, even after

he had been residing in France several months, and when Mrs. Eversfield returned to Versailles, he was also astonished at the readiness with which his affectionate companion agreed to tell her (whose confidence in the baronet's son was unbounded) that they *had been* married. But he readily attributed her yielding to his wishes in these respects, to the depth and intensity of her love for him, and took no further notice of it than to compliment her in his way, for being "a regular trump and no mistake."

All this time Nelly never entertained the slightest suspicion that the ex-lieutenant was not the phœnix she imagined him to be. He had always ready so many specious reasons for keeping his connexion with her a secret from his family, and she was so trusting, so loving, and so fearful he should involve himself in the ruin he appeared so much to fear, that she forbore to make the slightest allusion to the subject. After the

birth of their child they returned to England, and he placed her in a pleasant residence in the Regent's Park, under an assumed name, which she adopted without a question, where she resided till the heartless scheme was concocted, that sent her, still trusting, still uncomplaining, with her lovely child, into banishment at Versailles.

There was an object in Miles Blackmore visiting France, of which the reader has hitherto been kept in ignorance. It was to discover, if possible, the remaining family of his mother's sister, who, to the great scandal of her relations, who immediately discarded her, had made a runaway match with a young officer with whom she had afterwards proceeded to India. We have already very carefully described the manner in which he got acquainted with George Grindle, Nelly, and Tiney; but it was not till he became quite domesticated at Versailles, and particularly enamoured of the younger sister of

his interesting travelling acquaintance, that he accidentally heard from Mrs. Eversfield, that these lovely sisters were the only children of his erring aunt. By the will of the late Hester Blackmore, Ellen Hastings, or, in case of her death, any family that might survive her, were entitled to share equally the sum of 10,000*l.*, and having traced Major Hastings to France after his return to Europe, Miles Blackmore hoped he might in that country discover his children. He had just completed the necessary inquiries to identify the objects of his search, and obtained the evidence which would secure them their legacies, when he received the letter from the Amershams, requiring him to make inquiries concerning the Mrs. Grindle Lady Cramly had mentioned, and stating the reasons for their wishing him to make them.

This communication came upon him like a thunderbolt. He had entertained some

unpleasant misgivings relative to Mr. George Grindle, but from motives of delicacy he had refrained from putting any questions either to Nelly, her sister, or her stepmother. In an earlier page we have represented Miles Blackmore as exhibiting something like a decided interest for Miss Bruff; but there was no affection in this. He entertained a high respect for her, and felt for her no ordinary sympathy, but his feelings were certainly not those of a lover. He regarded the gentle and amiable Ellen with similar sentiments, and whilst waiting to enlighten her concerning the intentions of the man on whom she had so squandered her affections, it was not easy to say which was uppermost in his thoughts, the lady-like and interesting Jane, or the devoted and ill-used Ellen. Unfortunately, at this time occurred poor Tiney's dangerous illness, which, although his doating mother hung over him day and night, and did her utmost to secure him the best

medical attendance, terminated fatally in a few days. The excuses his heartless father made to her urgent prayer that he would hasten to see the dear child, Ellen took very much to heart, though she was as far as ever from casting on him the slightest blame; but Tiney's death was a terrible blow.

For several days she was in such a state that, urgent as was the case, Miles Blackmore found it impossible to communicate to her the infamous conduct of the wretch to whom she had been so truly devoted, and she at first so completely required the attention of those around her, that several days elapsed before he could find an opportunity of acquainting Mrs. Eversfield of the startling intelligence conveyed in his friend's letter. That lady was inexpressibly shocked. She had never entertained a moment's doubt as to the reality of Ellen's marriage, and she seemed quite overpowered with a sense of indignation and shame. There was no time

to be lost, so that directly poor Nelly was sufficiently convalescent, the dreadful communication was cautiously broken to her. It was with the greatest difficulty she could be made to believe it; it seemed quite impossible her dear George could think of acting so basely towards her; but on her being urged to get herself in readiness to proceed immediately to England, for the purpose of rescuing Miss Bruff from the fate with which she was threatened, and forcing Mr. George Grindle to act honourably towards herself, she remembered the motherly advice she had heard from Mrs. Mc Fillpot, and placed in Miles Blackmore's hands the long-neglected depositions the worthy Scotchwoman had procured for her.

Her kinsman saw at a glance the value of these papers, but to make Ellen's claim as Mrs. Grindle more secure, he lost no time in presenting himself at Mrs. Mc Fillpot's hotel, and with the witnesses of Mr. George Grin-

dle's public acknowledgment of Nelly as his wife, proceeded as fast as post-horses and steam-carriages could carry him to London, where Mrs. Eversfield had arrived. A brief and hurried letter from Scotland had prepared Mr. and Mrs. Amersham for their appearance at St. George's; but, as has been seen, they were very nearly too late.

We have merely to add, that Mr. George Grindle thought it prudent to take up his quarters at Boulogne, where he had scarcely been a week when, being discovered by a Russian prince (who was a greater adept in that sleight-of-hand than himself) in cultivating his customary good fellowship with kings, he was indignantly denounced as a cheat; a challenge followed, and the next morning he had the honour of receiving a shot in his thorax from Prince Rozkymozky, or rather from a French sharper who assumed that title. Of this wound he very soon afterwards died, regretted by few, but by

none so much as by his inconsolable widow, by whom, in spite of his treachery, he was still, with all the unselfish love of woman, very fondly regarded.

The gallant, and, we are obliged to add, still disagreeable colonel, resumed his intimacy with Lady Gramm, and became so frequent an attendant at her *soirées* as to stimulate the muse of Miss Pheezle more strongly than ever,' and the tongues of her ladyship's particular friends; and when his amiable daughter was, as the newspaper gentlemen say, led to the hymeneal altar by Mr. Francis Grindle, some twelvemonths or so after her first appearance there—to which she was accompanied with a similar object by Mr. Miles Blackmore and the beautiful Georgiana Hastings—it was generally rumoured that he was going to give up the house in Harley-street, for the more convenient one inhabited by Lady Gramm, to which with all its contents he was about to

become the lord and master—a rumour that gained confidence when it became known, that the respectable Mr. Rumfit and Miss Harris were on the point of leaving the colonel's establishment, to set up one for themselves in the green-grocery line at Brompton.

Of the spindle-shanked gentlewoman who has taken so conspicuous a part in these pages, we have only to say, that with the help of a low vagabond of an attorney of her acquaintance, she for some time continued to threaten the colonel with all sorts of pains and penalties; but finding neither slandering nor bullying brought her any advantage, she married a stylish journeyman hairdresser—a profession peculiarly endeared to her by remembrance—to whom she had for some time been under obligation for a variety of little articles for the toilet, which he had very handsomely presented to her, without troubling himself about asking permission of his principal, whose property they were; and

with their united *savings* he commenced business and she let lodgings. But not much more than a month after they had become comfortably settled, her husband thought proper to turn her out of doors, having discovered her making herself considerably more agreeable to his highly unexceptionable first floor, than he desired or would allow.

Sir George Grindle was much affected by the death of his favourite son; he grew serious, and began to pay much more attention than he had hitherto done to the conversation of the accomplished Francis. But he had received too powerful a shock to recover from it, and the volatile elderly gentleman quickly sank into the character of a melancholy hypochondriac; and by his death, which occurred in a few years, Colonel Bruff enjoyed the long cherished satisfaction of seeing his excellent and affectionate daughter "my lady."

Thus terminates our story; such is the

picture—certainly not an overcharged one—of characters who play such important parts in society as our modern "FATHERS AND SONS."

THE END.

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